

# **THE NAZI MIRROR OF OPINION: SPANISH MEDIA PERCEPTION OF THE THIRD REICH, 1930-1936**

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A thesis submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in the Department of History.

Chapel Hill  
2017

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## ABSTRACT

KENNETH ALARCÓN NEGY: The Nazi Mirror of Opinion:  
Spanish Media Perception of the Third Reich, 1930-1936  
(Under the direction of Konrad H. Jarausch)

This thesis examines Spanish perceptions of German fascism from 1930, shortly before the establishment of the Spanish Second Republic, until the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. Specifically, it focuses on the reporting of events related to Nazism and Germany in *ABC*, *El Socialista*, *El Fascio*, *F.E.*, and *Arriba* as a way to gauge the trajectory and character of the Spanish relationship with fascism. The portrayals and analyses of German affairs published in these newspapers in turn reflected the instability of the political situation in Spain prior to the Civil War and the impact of Spanish culture on its perception of Germany. This thesis contends that the German variant of fascism served simultaneously as a threat and warning for the far-left, an inspirational source for national rebirth for the center-right, and a possible model for the formation of a Spanish version of fascism for the far-right. However, despite the increasing international attention on Nazi Germany, events such as the assassination of Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss and the death of German President Paul von Hindenburg revealed the limits of Spanish conservative enthusiasm for Nazism and its preference for more traditionally authoritarian figures. Overall, this study places the Second Republic into the broader narrative of both the transnational spread of fascism and the European context of the fragility of interwar democracy.

For the Negy and Alarcón family.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I express sincere gratitude to my advisor, Konrad H. Jarausch, for his excellent guidance and encouragement during my time at UNC thus far and for his generosity in endorsing my decision to straddle two fields of history. I am appreciative of Lloyd Kramer and Tobias Hof for all their invaluable support and assistance. A special thanks goes to Chad Bryant for his encouragement and feedback throughout the entire writing process. Thanks also to everyone else who helped in reviewing this work or in enabling me to complete this project.

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## INTRODUCTION

During the early 1930s, two distinct European republics were on similar trajectories of turmoil and disarray. On January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1930, General Miguel Primo de Rivera was pressured into resigning as dictator of Spain, a position he had held since his military coup in 1923. As a result of this and the departure of King Alfonso XIII into exile the following year, Spain entered a period of extreme instability and increasingly hostile conflict between radical groups on both the left and right sides of the political spectrum. Spain's Second Republic (1931-1936) was at the mercy of competing conceptions for the type of government and political system that was best for the country, in effect creating an environment in which there was ultimately little faith in a democratic system and little desire to maintain it.

At the same time, the Weimar Republic (1918-1933) was experiencing instability and conflict due to similar circumstances stemming largely from the defeat in the First World War and the harsh terms of the resulting Treaty of Versailles. Then, exactly three years and a day after the resignation of the Spanish dictator in 1930, Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany by means of an agreement reached by President Paul von Hindenburg and the former chancellor Franz von Papen, among others, and Nazi Germany was established.<sup>1</sup> These events

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<sup>1</sup> For works providing a historical background, I have used: Steven Beller, *A Concise History of Austria* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Konrad H. Jarausch, *Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, vol. 1, 1889-1936: *Hubris* (New York: W. W.

gave fascism a greater prominence in Spain and other countries, and directed increased attention toward the Third Reich.

In this paper, I analyze Spanish reporting of several major events in Nazi history from 1930 until 1936, when the Spanish Civil War began. The focus of this research is the Spanish perception of the Nazi rise to power in Germany and Spain's struggle to understand fascism. I argue that the German variant of fascism served simultaneously as a threat and warning for the far-left, an inspirational source for national rebirth for the center-right, and a possible model for the formation of a Spanish version of fascism for the far-right. Further, although Italian Fascism may have had clearer and more lasting cultural connections to Spain, German politics during this time also resonated with the Spanish media because of the similarities in both countries' political situations and the increased international focus on Germany.<sup>2</sup> Spanish perception was shaded, however, by the specific Spanish context and ideological beliefs of each of the newspapers, which then would also be affected by the evolving political situation within the country resulting in a mutual pattern of influence.

I have selected newspapers that serve as representatives of three of the main sides of the Spanish political spectrum. These are *El Socialista*, *ABC*, and each of the main incarnations of

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Norton & Company, 1998); Stanley Payne, *The Collapse of the Spanish Republic, 1933-1936: Origins of the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); Payne, *Fascism in Spain, 1923-1977* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999); William D. Phillips, Jr. and Carla Rahn Phillips, *A Concise History of Spain*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Paul Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War: Reform, Reaction, and Revolution in the Second Republic*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 1994); Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977); and William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959).

<sup>2</sup> As an example of work addressing the Italian influence on Spain in the 1930s and 1940s, see Victoriano Peña Sánchez, *Intelectuales y fascismo: La cultura italiana del "ventennio fascista" y su repercusión en España* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1995).

the fascist newspapers available at varying times in Spain. *El Socialista* was and continues to be the daily newspaper of the social-democratic PSOE, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. It was selected to represent the leftist parties in Spain because of its position as the largest and most important political party on the left during this time.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, its reporting hinted at the radicalism that plagued the Second Republic from the left, and more clearly portrays the influence of ideology, in this case Marxism, on journalistic interpretations.

Representing the Spanish right, *ABC* was a moderate conservative (monarchist) newspaper that, like *El Socialista*, continues to be published today. It was founded in 1903 and became a daily newspaper two years later. It was one of two main center-right newspapers at the time and had the largest printing of the two with around 150,000 copies sold daily.<sup>4</sup> During the 1930s, several of *ABC*'s writers, in particular Eugenio Montes, became increasingly radical and fascist leaning in their reporting, with some later writing for the fascist newspapers as well. Their articles might not have perfectly represented *ABC*'s political views, but the fact they were published despite their increasing admiration for fascism suggests that their views were at least tolerated, if not accepted by others working for the paper.

In addition to these two periodicals, I have included *El Fascio*, *F.E.*, and *Arriba* in my analysis to represent the fascist perspective in Spain.<sup>5</sup> Despite some overlap between writers working for these papers and *ABC* (in addition to some other conservative newspapers), I have chosen to include them in order to add the voices of self-described Spanish fascists to the

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<sup>3</sup> Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Carlos Barrera, *Periodismo y franquismo: De la censura a la apertura* (Barcelona: Ediciones Internacionales Universitarias, 1995), 18.

<sup>5</sup> One additional newspaper not included here was released at the university level on the Falange's behalf called *Haz*, to which José Antonio Primo de Rivera and other main Falange figures contributed articles.

analysis. I do so with the idea that their version of fascism did not need to be an exact replica of the Italian or German model. In this sense, I assume Spanish fascism to be an early example of what Christopher Hill describes as the “universalization” of a concept, or an idea that can be both transnational and particular to a given setting.<sup>6</sup> I also adopt Roger Griffin’s strategy of focusing on their ideas and self-conception, regardless of how truly fascist they may have been in practice.<sup>7</sup> From hindsight, the perspective of the Spanish fascists is also significant because their Falange party would subsequently be adopted as the official state party by the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco.

Originally intended to be a weekly paper, *El Fascio* was immediately shut down in March of 1933 by the Republican government after having printed only one issue. Since the Falange Española, the Spanish fascist party, was not established until the end of the year, *El Fascio* did not officially represent any political party within Spain. It was instead a joint effort by many who would soon thereafter go on to form the Falange, including the son of General Miguel Primo de Rivera and leader of the Spanish fascist movement, José Antonio Primo de Rivera. Each of its reincarnations, *F.E.* and *Arriba*, also faced similar obstacles in publication, with the former only publishing fifteen issues from December of 1933 until July of 1934 and the latter around thirty issues from March of 1935 until March of 1936.<sup>8</sup> Despite their focus on ideological discussion and lack of traditional reporting, the fascist newspapers merit

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<sup>6</sup> Christopher L. Hill, “Conceptual Universalization in the Transnational Nineteenth Century,” in *Global Intellectual History*, ed. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 134-135.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1994), 12-19. For an alternative, yet complementary approach of focusing on fascist actions and behavior while dismissing their rhetoric, see Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> The first edition facsimile of *Arriba*, which I have used for this research, did not include the paper’s final issue prior to the commencement of the Spanish Civil War.

consideration because of their direct responses to Nazism and attempted adaptation of fascism to the Spanish context.

My analysis is divided chronologically into four stages of Nazi and Nazi-related history. The first chapter focuses on the final two years of the Weimar Republic, with the spectacular Nazi successes in the Reichstag elections of 1930 and 1932. In chapter two, I analyze the reporting on the Nazi seizure of power and the growing precariousness of European peace in 1933, covering the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany, the Reichstag fire, the passing of the Enabling Act, and the German exit from the League of Nations. Chapter three covers the Nazi consolidation of power in 1934, epitomized by the so-called Röhm Putsch and the death of German President Paul von Hindenburg, which allowed Hitler to combine the positions of president and chancellor into the official title of “Führer.” I have also included analysis of the assassination of Austrian chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss because he and Hindenburg provided the Spanish press with alternative right-wing statesmen for comparison to Hitler. The fourth and final chapter deals with events from 1935 until the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, with the primary focus on the Saar plebiscite and the remilitarization of the Rhineland.

The events were selected for both their significance in German politics and for the amount of attention given to them by the foreign press. Hence, although the Beer Hall Putsch and the publication of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* could easily be selected as seminal moments in Nazi history, they are only significant with hindsight; they were minor events at the time and therefore had little impact on the Spanish press.<sup>9</sup> The selected events have served primarily as a

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<sup>9</sup> The Beer Hall Putsch trial and the later publication of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* were given no coverage within *ABC* or *El Socialista*, and other events such as the announcement of the Nürnberg Laws only received minimal attention.

framework and focus for my research but I have not limited my analysis to articles directly covering or related to these events. Where I have found them insightful, I have incorporated articles referring to Germany but connected to the sections in which they are discussed only by the date of publication, such as an article defending the need for dictatorships in Germany and Italy by Eugenio Montes published a day before the Röhm-Putsch. This is especially the case for the fascist newspapers since there were often no publications at the time of some of the selected events due to censorship.

My approach is guided by the notion that perception is not a one-directional process. On the contrary, perception is relational, which is to say that the perception of or interest in a topic or subject can reveal details about both the subject as well as the object of attention. Therefore, in analyzing Spanish reporting of news from the Third Reich, I assume that the reports reflected and were shaped by, implicitly or explicitly, the nature of Spanish politics and identity at the time. The journalists and newspapers, then, acted as filters of Nazi Germany for the Spanish public, translating into a Spanish cultural language the events, statements, and behavior of a foreign society with a distinct background. As the primary source of information from abroad for most Spanish citizens, directly or indirectly, newspapers also reflected and shaped the views of their Spanish readers to varying degrees and can therefore be used to access Spanish reactions to events abroad in a general way.<sup>10</sup> This assumption suggests a cyclical pattern of the reporting of Nazi German affairs being shaped by the perspective of the interpreter, which then strengthened, weakened or altered public opinion and ideology, finally affecting the context from

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<sup>10</sup> Gabriel Tortella Casares calculated a Spanish literacy rate of 68.87% in 1930, rising to 76.83% in 1940. The reading level at which one could be considered literate, however, was not mentioned. See Tortella's *The Development of Modern Spain: An Economic History of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 263.

which the interpreter reported future events. By tracing the language and portrayal in the reports and articles, I will track these shifts in Spanish perception of fascism and analyze their connection to Spanish radicalism and anti-democratic sentiment.<sup>11</sup>

Further, this research expands the work of Mercedes Semolinos Arribas in *Hitler y la prensa de la II República Española*. Published in 1985, this monograph chronicles the reactions of the Spanish press to the Nazi rise to power from March 1932 until July 1933 based on eight different daily newspapers. Hers is one of the only works dedicated to the specific study of the Spanish perceptions of Germany as presented in the newspapers of the Second Republic.<sup>12</sup> Semolinos rightly concluded that the connection between Nazi Germany and the Spanish Second Republic appears stronger than scholars have traditionally recognized when analyzing press reports from that time. She also found that the conservative newspapers viewed the authoritarian regime positively, whereas the socialists opposed the Nazi regime based on their socialist and alleged republican identities. Both sides exhibited an increasing interest and intensity of opinion

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<sup>11</sup> This assumption of the relationship of newspapers and public opinion parallels the emphasis on the interpretation of the reader from reception theory and the importance of context in shaping the meaning of language from J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1975). See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006) for the foundational text connecting the formation of an imaginary national identity with the rise of the press.

<sup>12</sup> There is, however, a wide selection of scholarship devoted to Nazi-Spanish relations more generally. Among others, see Wayne H. Bowen, *Spaniards and Nazi Germany: Collaboration in the New Order* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000); Christian Leitz, *Economic Relations Between Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain, 1936-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Stanley Payne, *Franco and Hitler: Spain, Germany, and World War II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Ángel Viñas, *Franco, Hitler y el estallido de la Guerra Civil: Antecedentes y consecuencias* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2001); and Robert H. Whealey, *Hitler and Spain: The Nazi Role in the Spanish Civil War* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989).

through 1933.<sup>13</sup> However, her analysis lacked the self-proclaimed fascist voices within Spain since the Spanish fascist newspapers only emerged at the end of 1933, with the exception of one issue published in March. Additionally, the limited time frame prevented her from identifying longer trends throughout the full span of the Second Republic.

By beginning in 1930 with the election that first brought the Nazis to the forefront of German politics and ending with the Spanish Civil War in 1936, this analysis sheds light on the particularities of the Spanish reception of the German variant of fascism and seeks to answer: How did the Spanish press perceive the Nazis? What type of language was used in the reporting on German and Nazi events? How did the newspapers' political and historical contexts shade their interpretations of Nazism? What role, if any, did the Nazis play in the formulation of a specifically Spanish version of fascism? And how did these perceptions change over time?

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<sup>13</sup> Mercedes Semolinos Arribas *Hitler y la prensa de la II República española* (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1985), 6, 8-10.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1930-1932: A Minor News Story from Abroad**

#### **German Reichstag Elections (September, 1930)**

In 1930, after the end of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, a new, weak replacement regime was established in Spain. Republican forces were beginning to organize and oppose the government. At the same time in the Weimar Republic, a Reichstag election was held for the second time in two years. Since the election of 1928, the National Socialist party had held twelve parliamentary seats, or less than five-percent of the total number of seats available. With such a low number, it was a great surprise when they won ninety-five more seats in the new election of 1930. Although no party earned enough votes to win a true majority, the Nazi Party became the second largest in the Reichstag, only behind the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD), or the German Social-Democratic Party.

Coverage on the day of the election demonstrates the little regard Spanish newspapers had for the minor Nazi Party at the time. On its front page, *El Socialista* printed a bar graph to visually depict the Reichstag's breakdown by party membership from the previous election (Figure 1). In front of each bar, one or multiple human figures were drawn to represent each party. Since the German Social-Democrats held over 150 seats, nearly double the second largest party in the Reichstag, they were represented by a plainly dressed, plain-looking worker who stood towering over the others with his fist raised. By contrast, a tiny cartoonish figure wearing an officer's cap was depicted carrying a staff with the swastika at the top for the Nazi Party. In

its prediction of the election results, *El Socialista* showed no concern regarding the “racist” party and instead stated that the Social Democrats were set to achieve a “resounding triumph” in the day’s elections.<sup>14</sup>



**Figure 1 "The Socialist Forces in German Parliament: 152 versus 339" (*El Socialista*, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1930)**

*ABC* printed a similar article on the same day with its own predictions. It concurred with other newspapers’ estimations that, in general, the extreme parties on both the right and the left would gain more seats at the expense of the center parties already in power. Although they expected the socialists to lose some seats, this would not be enough to cause a significant shift in

<sup>14</sup> “Las elecciones alemanas: Procedentes y datos numéricos,” *El Socialista*, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1930, 1.

the composition of the Reichstag. Finally, they cited a poll published by *Diario de las Ocho de la Noche* that predicted the Nazis would only gain fifty additional seats.<sup>15</sup>

On the day following the election and the announcement of the surprising gains made by the Nazi Party, *El Socialista* downplayed the loss of socialist seats and the Nazi success. In an article titled “Confidence in the Future,” the election results were dismissed as largely unsurprising. The extremist parties on the right and left, the Nazis and Communists, had been expected to gain seats since they had campaigned vehemently. The socialists, it reported, remained confident in their position because they still retained the largest number of seats and would therefore be able to stop any Nazi motion. The center groups would need to form a coalition with the left or right in order to retain its control of the government and *El Socialista* viewed the latter option as unlikely.<sup>16</sup>

Both *El Socialista* and *ABC* struggled during this time to understand National Socialism, and for similar reasons. On the topic of their name, *El Socialista* wrote that the “fascists . . . impudently call themselves National Socialists.” The name “National Socialist” was called into question as a false descriptor for the “German fascists” because of the movement’s connection to industrial and capitalist interests. One of *El Socialista*’s writers, Antonio Ramos Oliveira, therefore called for the proper education of the German masses in order for them to be able to distinguish between real and pseudo-socialism.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> “Alemania: La campaña electoral en su momento culminante,” *ABC*, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1930, 35.

<sup>16</sup> “De las elecciones alemanas: Confianza en el porvenir,” *El Socialista*, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1930, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Antonio Ramos Oliveira, “Aumentan sus fuerzas los elementos extremistas.—La Socialdemocracia sigue siendo el grupo más fuerte del Reichstag,” *El Socialista*, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1930, 1.

*ABC* also struggled with the National Socialist name, as evinced by an article in their newspaper printed on September 16<sup>th</sup>. *ABC* listed the full, official name of the party (the National Socialist German Workers Party) and pointed out the irony of a so-called socialist party gaining the support of the large landowners and industrialists. It described Nazism as “ultranationalist” and “violently anti-Semitic and xenophobic,” while also being, or wishing to be, socialist and “in some ways almost communist.” One of its writers expanded on this confusion, writing:

If the nationalists coincide in part with the communists with respect to worker vindication, the former are [also] in agreement with the extreme right with respect to foreign policy. What for Hitler is a national struggle is for the socialists an international proletarian fight against the capitalist and imperialist powers; but the result is the same.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, in 1930, both the right and the left within Spain struggled to comprehend the emergent party with seemingly contradictory values.

Ultimately, both *El Socialista* and *ABC* expressed concern regarding the election results. In *El Socialista*’s September 17<sup>th</sup> edition, the paper wrote that no one believed the fascists would advance in such alarming proportions. It rejected the commonly held idea of communism as a threat and instead argued that the danger to both democracy and the world came from “national fascism.”<sup>19</sup> In a similar vein, *ABC* quoted a statement from the *Daily Herald*, a British newspaper, suggesting that a Nazi takeover would lead to a reactionary government, a

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<sup>18</sup> “Las elecciones generales en Alemania: Importante triunfo de los partidos extremos,” *ABC*, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1930, 21.

<sup>19</sup> “Las elecciones alemanas: Al final triunfará la democracia,” *El Socialista*, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1930, 1.

dictatorship, or possibly the restoration of the monarchy. Either of these options would result in disaster for Germany and Europe.<sup>20</sup>

### **German Reichstag Elections (July, 1932)**

Within the span of two years, a republican victory in the general Spanish elections of 1931 caused King Alfonso XIII to flee the country, resulting in the establishment of the Second Republic. The socialist government began implementing radical leftist policies and immediately faced public backlash from various conservative and liberal forces as they challenged its legitimacy. In Germany, Franz von Papen, the newly appointed Chancellor, dissolved the Reichstag and called for a new election on July 31<sup>st</sup>. If the results from the German elections of 1930 were surprising, the 1932 election results were doubly so. The Nazi Party gained an astounding 123 seats, increasing their total number to 230 and making them the largest party in the Reichstag, although still without an absolute majority. *ABC* wrote that the election had been called in order to determine whether the German people preferred a dictatorship or parliamentary democracy. However, the paper doubted this could be determined since a vote for Hitler was still a democratic act and could simply be a desire for reform. Alternatively, a vote against him might not mean a rejection of a dictatorship but only the rejection of one under Adolf Hitler. They predicted no majority outcome like in the previous election.<sup>21</sup>

*El Socialista*, on the other hand, was demonstrably concerned. It portrayed the election as an epic battle between the socialists and communists on one side and the conservative forces

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<sup>20</sup> “Alemania: Después de las elecciones generales: Comentario desfavorable del órgano laborista,” *ABC*, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1930, 23.

<sup>21</sup> “Hoy se celebran en toda Alemania las trascendentales elecciones generales: La importancia de las elecciones,” *ABC*, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1932, 34.

led by the Nazis on the other. Regardless of the outcome, it expected the battle to be taken to the streets, resulting in violence and chaos. *El Socialista*'s writers asked what conclusions Spanish socialists could draw from the circumstances. At this point, the paper acknowledged that it had abandoned hope and become pessimistic regarding the future. They believed the defeat of the socialists was now a *fait accompli*, but hoped they were mistaken.<sup>22</sup> On the day after the elections, *El Socialista* printed an article that recognized the victory of fascism and predicted four possible outcomes: 1) a fascist coup, 2) a civil war followed by a dictatorship, 3) a continuation and increase of dictatorial methods under Chancellor von Papen, or 4) a coalition between the Nazis and the Catholic Center party. It then argued that international socialism should take note of the situation in Germany since there was much to learn from this case.<sup>23</sup>

In stark contrast to the reaction seen in *El Socialista*, *ABC*'s reporting offered little insight into its writers' reactions to the news. On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, the election results were described as "magnificent," although this seems to be a reference to the unexpected outcome and does not seem to reflect excitement on the part of its journalists.<sup>24</sup> Writing about the little immediate public reaction in Germany, they described the fact that there had been no violence or need for police intervention as "fortunate."<sup>25</sup> In a later report on an attempted arson attack by right-wing extremists on a communist newspaper press building, no other sign of reaction was offered

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<sup>22</sup> "Las elecciones de hoy en Alemania: ¿Servirá de algo la consulta popular?" *El Socialista*, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1932, 1.

<sup>23</sup> "La situación política en Alemania: Unas elecciones que acentúan la confusion," *El Socialista*, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1932, 1.

<sup>24</sup> "En las elecciones generales de Alemania los hitleristas han obtenido las dos quintas partes de los votos. Y en esta misma proporción figuraran en el nuevo parlamento," *ABC*, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1932, 15.

<sup>25</sup> "Elecciones tranquilas en Berlín. Se vota temprano," *ABC*, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1932, 15.

besides characterizing the attack as a “sad” event.<sup>26</sup> Besides a possible aversion to the violence occurring in Germany at the time, it is unclear from its reporting how the writers of *ABC* perceived the German election of 1932 or the Nazi Party. Thus, during this first stage of Spanish reporting on pre-Nazi German events, *ABC* and *El Socialista* recognized the German elections as newsworthy but, aside from the socialists’ rising pessimistic tone, the attention they gave the Nazis was relatively minor compared to the shift that would occur in 1933.

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<sup>26</sup> “Atentados terroristas de los ‘nazis’ en Prusia oriental,” *ABC*, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1932, 17.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 1933: The Specter of Nazism Haunts and Excites Spain

#### **Hitler's Appointment as Chancellor (January, 1933)**

After suffering from further backlash over the brutal crushing of a leftist uprising in Casas Viejas in January of 1933, Manuel Azaña, the prime minister of the Spanish Second Republic, was unable to retain popular support and resigned in September of that year. This led to a new election the following month, shifting control of the government to the hands of moderate-conservative republicans. In Germany one year earlier, Papen was removed as Chancellor of Germany and replaced by Kurt von Schleicher, who was unsuccessful in garnering support for the creation of a majority coalition in the Reichstag. Papen began discussing political options with President Paul von Hindenburg and others behind the scenes regarding Schleicher's replacement. It was ultimately agreed that Hitler would become chancellor with Papen as his vice-chancellor under the assumption that the political and social elites of Germany could manipulate Hitler to achieve their own goals. He and his cabinet were sworn in on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1933.

*El Socialista's* response to the appointment was one of concern but hope in light of the circumstances. On January 31<sup>st</sup>, it published an article that suggested there was reason, however minor, to be relieved since Hitler had not accepted the chancellorship on his own conditions. Instead, he had assumed power as leader of a coalition and not a Nazi majority. Regardless, the paper acknowledged the irony of Hitler, an anti-democratic figure on what was described as a



“mad rush” to power, pledging an oath to the constitution of the Weimar Republic.<sup>27</sup> *ABC* also expressed no (additional) concern in its immediate reporting, writing, “we do not think that the work of Hitler’s cabinet will bring any new dangers.”<sup>28</sup>

On February 2nd, newspapers reported on Hitler’s call for new Reichstag elections to be held roughly a month later. *ABC* offered few opinions on this development, but added that if the elections followed the pattern they were noticing in the country, it would be a mistake to ignore “the dangers of an open dictatorship in Germany.”<sup>29</sup> *El Socialista* once again acknowledged that the threat of a coup was being prevented by the leading politicians’ clashing desires and inability to cooperate with one another. However, it stated that Hitler’s “megalomaniacal dream” was not the most immediate threat to Germany. The danger came instead from Alfred Hugenberg, the leader of the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei*, the German National People’s Party, and considered by *El Socialista* to be in power as the man of “agrarian autarchy” and “big industry.” According to the newspaper, Hugenberg, along with Hitler’s help, was behind a capitalist conspiracy in Germany. It claimed that the discovery of the “Hugenberg-Hitler” conspiracy should alarm the bourgeoisie, which supported Hugenberg and opposed Hitler, as well as the proletarian followers of Hitler. *El Socialista* hoped that this would cause the proletariat to abandon its support of the Nazis and join the communists and socialists.<sup>30</sup> As the threat of socialist defeat in Germany became stronger, *El Socialista*’s Marxist influence began heavily affecting its interpretations of

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<sup>27</sup> “La crisis alemana: Hitler, hacia la dictadura,” *El Socialista*, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1933, 1.

<sup>28</sup> “Adolfo Hitler, caudillo nacional-socialista, ha formado en Alemania un gobierno de extrema derecha,” *ABC*, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1933, 35.

<sup>29</sup> “Boletín del día: Otras elecciones en Alemania,” *ABC*, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1933, 35.

<sup>30</sup> “Nota internacional: El contubernio capitalista en Alemania,” *El Socialista*, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1933, 1.

German events, but both the socialist and conservative newspapers began to recognize the danger in the Nazi rise.

### **Reichstag Fire (March, 1933)**

Just nine days before the newly scheduled Reichstag elections in March, the Reichstag building was set on fire in an arson attack committed by a former communist from the Netherlands named Martinus van der Lubbe. He was later arrested and after admitting guilt was sentenced to death. Nazi leaders took advantage of the opportunity and claimed it was the beginning of a Communist conspiracy to bring about revolution. In response, the Nazis declared a state of emergency and abolished the civil rights granted by the Weimar Constitution.

Shortly thereafter, *ABC* and *El Socialista* began to offer their own interpretations of and reactions to the fire. *El Socialista* quickly denounced the event as a Nazi conspiracy. On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, it argued that the arson attempt shared the “unmistakable style of fascism” and that Lubbe was therefore a Nazi agent acting on their behalf. There were two reasons, *El Socialista* argued, to suspect Nazi responsibility for the act. First, the Reichstag represented the Weimar Republic and social democracy in Germany. The Nazis would therefore naturally feel compelled to destroy it as a symbolic act of hatred. Second was their “biological need” to destroy their enemies and the relative ease with which they could use the arson attack for this purpose. These two motivations, *El Socialista* argued, were intimately tied together in the act.<sup>31</sup>

*ABC* announced on March 1<sup>st</sup> that the situation in Germany had become so interesting that it felt the need to have someone on site instead of merely transmitting reports from news agencies such as *United Press* as before. It was therefore sending a writer named César

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<sup>31</sup> “Nota internacional: El incendio del Reichstag,” *El Socialista*, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1933, 1.

González-Ruano to Berlin to serve as a reporter on the ground.<sup>32</sup> A poet, novelist, and journalist, he would later publish *Seis meses con los nazis* about his positive impressions of Germany during his stay that year before moving to Rome to report on Fascist Italy.<sup>33</sup> As will be seen later, González-Ruano and Eugenio Montes, a journalist and writer also sent to Berlin a few months later on behalf of *ABC*, would write some of the paper's most romanticized and positive opinion pieces on Nazi Germany. However, at the time, *ABC* offered few assessments of the arson attempt.

As the Nazi persecution of German communists worsened, with communist newspapers being shut down and raids being conducted on communist headquarters, *El Socialista* became more agitated and hostile toward the Nazi regime. The language its writers used during this time to describe Nazism, the Nazis, and Hitler specifically suggests the level of aggression and resentment they felt. They described German fascism as “sadistic and horrible,” later referring to it as “fascist cretinism” or a “fascist pathology.” The Nazis were labeled the “National Socialist horde,” and with a clearly sarcastic tone, Hitler was referred to as “the lovely Adolf.”<sup>34</sup>

*ABC* also recognized the increased persecution of communists in Germany but expressed little sympathy for them, possibly causing a shift in conservative perceptions of National Socialism. Instead, it was interested in the Nazi motives for not simply banning the Communist Party immediately. In an article printed on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, it argued that the Nazis were unwilling to

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<sup>32</sup> “*ABC* en Berlin: González-Ruano salió ayer para la capital de Alemania,” *ABC*, March, 1<sup>st</sup>, 1933, 28.

<sup>33</sup> Julio Rodríguez-Puértolas, *Literatura fascista española*, vol. 1, *Historia* (Madrid: Akal, 1986), 80.

<sup>34</sup> “Nota internacional: El incendio del Reichstag,” *El Socialista*, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1933, 1; “En Alemania: Hitler movilizará en Prusia ochenta mil hombres con motivo de las elecciones,” *El Socialista*, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1933, 3.

do this because they feared an SPD majority outcome in the upcoming elections. Since votes that would have normally gone to the communists would then be cast for the socialists if the former were immediately banned, *ABC* speculated that the Nazis preferred to wait until after the elections to ban them. As suggested by the title of an *ABC* article from March 3<sup>rd</sup>, “Hitler’s politics [were becoming] more rightist everyday” and both *El Socialista* and *ABC* were witnessing the increasing authoritarianism of the German government.<sup>35</sup>

### Enabling Act (March, 1933)



Figure 2 “The Sarcasm of a Motto” (*El Socialista*, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1933)

<sup>35</sup> “La Política de Hitler adquiere cada día orientación más derechista,” *ABC*, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1933, 31.

In response to the arson attempt, the Nazi government was granted the right to bypass the Reichstag in creating legislation with the passing of the Enabling Act on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1933. In effect, this legalized the Nazi dictatorship by allowing Adolf Hitler and other leaders to create, change, or abolish laws without the limitation of parliamentary obstacles. Despite the significance of this act, little was said about it in either *El Socialista* or *ABC*. Instead, the newspapers continued to react to the general, worsening conditions in Germany. For example, on the day before the ratification of the Enabling Act, *El Socialista* printed a political cartoon that again highlighted the contradictory nature of National Socialism's patriotism and its repressive acts against some of its own citizens. Titled "The Sarcasm of a Motto," the cartoon depicted an expansive WWI soldier cemetery under the silhouette of a German soldier (Figure 2). In the foreground stands Hitler with his arm raised in a fascist salute to the silhouette. In his other hand, though, he carries a bloody dagger and there are people lying on the ground, presumably dead. The caption to the political cartoon reads "Germany, awake!"<sup>36</sup>

It was around this time that the Nazi regime started to attract the positive interest of Spanish conservatives. *ABC* began to express this growing admiration, and its interpretations of Nazi events would almost never again coincide with the socialist perspective. On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, it reported that José María Gil Robles y Quiñones de León, the head of the CEDA, a Spanish conservative coalition party founded earlier that month, had given a speech on the question of fascism in Spain. Despite his alleged regret for the need for fascism, he defended it by explaining the German and Italian contexts for their respective versions of fascism. According to the report, he also reflected on the tragedy of seven students in Bologna, Italy who were assassinated by communists. Thus, although he was quoted as detesting political violence, Gil

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<sup>36</sup> Arribas, "El sarcasmo de un lema," *El Socialista* March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1933, 1.

Robles suggested the need for fascism in Spain and called for the youth to prepare for battle.<sup>37</sup>

No additional commentary by *ABC*'s writers was provided.

In another article from the same issue, César González-Ruano reported his experience in Potsdam at the first Reichstag session held after the arson attack, known as the Day of Potsdam. His writing at this time suggests the extent of his admiration for Nazi Germany or at least the fact that he had adopted its symbolic language. In describing the importance of Potsdam to the German identity, he relied on the metaphor of the nation as a German soldier wearing a military uniform. He called Potsdam the “highest and most illustrious award that Germany could have placed on its Prussian military lapel,” and Weimar was then called the stain on its uniform. González-Ruano also referred to Potsdam as the capital of the “spirit of Germania” and the only aspect of Germany that did not surrender during the “fourteen Marxist years,” again referring to the Weimar Republic. After further complimenting the sight of the German soldiers at the event, González-Ruano ended his article by stating that it was a mistake on the part of non-Germans to assume that the Nazis had seized power. It was clear to him that it was the German people who had placed them in their ruling position.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, on March 24<sup>th</sup>, for its daily bulletin article, *ABC* discussed Hitler's speech to the Reichstag the previous day regarding the Enabling Act. It described the speech as surprisingly “moderate,” and wrote that it was especially so in comparison to Mussolini's speech to the Italian parliament two weeks after his respective rise to power. Further, *ABC* reported that there

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<sup>37</sup> “En Barcelona dio ayer una conferencia el Sr. Gil Robles,” *ABC*, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1933, 20.

<sup>38</sup> “*ABC* en Berlin: El Reichstag se ha reunido en Potsdam, ciudad simbólica de las glorias prusianas. Discursos de Hindenburg e Hitler. La ceremonia religiosa y la primera session,” *ABC*, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1933, 31.

was no sign of threats or reasons for alarm from the speech.<sup>39</sup> *ABC*'s view of Nazi Germany was thus becoming more positive and its reporting suggests a radicalization of its journalists' views.

### ***El Fascio* (March, 1933)**

It was around this time that the first Spanish fascist newspaper was printed as a response to the excitement and attention generated by the rise of the Nazis in Germany. This date also coincided with the third anniversary of the death of Spain's former dictator, General Miguel Primo de Rivera. According to historian Stanley Payne, *El Fascio* was a success, "attract[ing] numerous subscriptions" and "enjoy[ing] a huge press run."<sup>40</sup> However, the Spanish government immediately shut it down and pulled it off the shelves. Unlike its subsequent incarnations that allowed for some reporting within their pages, *El Fascio* might be better described as a collection of anonymously written fascist manifestos and general fascist interest stories: each article dealt with the question of what fascism should be in Spain, the cases of Italian Fascism and German Nazism and its leaders, and the fascist solution as hypothetically applied to Spanish politics.

On the front page, articles directed at both the youth and the Spanish left in the hope of wooing its members away from Marxism called for a union of all Spaniards under the banner of fascism. Another article argued that Spanish fascism meant the rush toward building a new state that was fully its own, free from foreign influence. In discussing the question of whether Spain should follow the Italian or German models of fascism, one writer responded that it should not copy either model, but could use them as inspiration.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> "Boletín del día: El discurso de Hitler," *ABC*, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1933, 33.

<sup>40</sup> Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 78.

<sup>41</sup> "Propósitos claros y misión concreta," *El Fascio*, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1933, 2.

In an additional article that proposed a party platform for Spanish fascism, the author called for “making the [Spanish] nation great again . . . by projecting onto the future the secret of a great past.”<sup>42</sup> A comparison to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, as represented by the “fascio lictorio” and the swastika respectively, highlighted the Roman and German Empires as each of their glorious pasts. A new symbol was needed to represent Spanish fascism since the “fascio lictorio” was too “particular” and the swastika too exclusive and racist. According to the author of the program, Spain’s glorious past, like Italy, was its time as part of the Roman Empire, and its aim had to be the continuation of the Roman goal of spreading Christianity. In this way, the writer of the article suggested, fascism in Spain would be more successful than in Italy and Germany because it would be universal.<sup>43</sup>



Figure 3 “The Leader” (*El Fascio*, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1933)

<sup>42</sup> “Hacer de nuevo grande a un pueblo que lo ha sido ya significa proyectar sobre un porvenir—desde el presente—el secreto de un pasado genial.”

<sup>43</sup> “Puntos de partida plan,” *El Fascio*, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1933, 3.



On the succeeding pages of *El Fascio*, it is clear that there was a desire for a Spanish fascist leader. One image with the title “El Caudillo,” or the leader,<sup>44</sup> showed squares with each depicting the leaders of Italy, Germany, and Spain (Figure 3). Mussolini and Hitler’s drawn portraits filled the squares belonging to their respective countries, but Spain’s square merely contained a large question mark.<sup>45</sup> In another example, a writer described an event of special significance for him that had occurred the previous week. He had been listening to the radio searching for international stations but there had been an ever-present interference from a station out of Madrid playing tangos and flamenco. Suddenly, he heard the energetic voice of Adolf Hitler and the thunderous clapping of a German crowd. As he listened to the speech, he imagined the German audience standing and saluting the German leader. During the pauses, he could just make out the sound of classical guitars playing and the unique singing of flamenco coming from the Madrid radio station interference. He immediately began to think about the poor living conditions in Andalucía, the southern region of Spain, and a tragic incident in which the Spanish government had brutally murdered participants in an anti-government demonstration there. His memory was then suddenly interrupted by the continuation of Hitler’s speech. After an hour of his mind traveling back and forth between Hitler’s speech and the romanticized southern fields of Spain, he realized that he wished it were a Spanish fascist dictator and a clapping Spanish audience to which he was listening.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Two definitions were offered in the *Real Academia Española*’s entries under the word “caudillo” in 1925 and 1939: 1) a military leader in war or 2) “a leader of a guild, community, or body.” The *RAE* now includes a third entry: “a political dictator.”

<sup>45</sup> Orbegozo, “El caudillo,” *El Fascio*, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1933, 4.

<sup>46</sup> “Alemania – España: El fascismo y la democracia, coincidentes... en unas audiciones de radio,” *El Fascio*, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1933, 5.

Finally, in addition to anecdotal articles such as the previous one, *El Fascio* included biographies of both Mussolini and Hitler, with a full page dedicated to each leader. A selection translated into Spanish from Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was also included. The biography of the German leader ended with a statement expressing both the writer's desire for other states to take note of Hitler's ideas and the prediction that they would soon impact the European continent.<sup>47</sup>

Clearly, the articles, anecdotes, images, and biographical texts included in *El Fascio*'s pages demonstrate the level of interest in and romanticization of Hitler and Nazi Germany, with their impact on an inchoate fascist movement within Spain on full display. As previously mentioned, the Spanish fascist newspaper was received with hostility on the part of the government at the time, and was immediately shut down. The Falange Española, the self-described fascist political party that was founded by many of the same writers of *El Fascio*, would later establish two other fascist newspapers before the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. Both *F.E.* and *Arriba* would expand on the topics and tone of their predecessor.

### **Germany Announces Exit from League of Nations (October, 1933)**

On October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1933, just nine months after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, the German government announced its decision to withdraw from the League of Nations. A plebiscite was prepared in order to confirm the German public's support of this action. The ostensible reason for the exit was the failure of the other nations to limit their military to reach parity with Germany, as called for by the Treaty of Versailles. The announcement created an international uproar and was one of the first signs of the precarious state of European peace.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> "La recia figura de Adolfo Hítler," *El Fascio*, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1933, 12.

<sup>48</sup> Spain was a member of the League of Nations until 1939.

In its reporting on the news, *ABC* continued to downplay the increasingly problematic decisions coming from Germany. The following day's issue offered an anonymous, apologetic interpretation based on a speech given by Hitler on the subject. "Without the conciliatory speech by Adolf Hitler," recognized the writer, "the situation would appear very dangerous for world peace." It was clear to *ABC* that Berlin did not wish to rearm itself but simply wanted the other powers to respect the armament clause for military parity included in the World War I peace treaty. The writer then turned to the emotional aspect of the situation, stating, "there is no doubt that the action furthers the fear of possible German aggression. Fear is a subjective emotion that cannot be debated. But another subjective emotion is self-love." Referring to patriotism (national self-love) as an emotion equivalent to fear, the writer argued that the German decision was a reflection of its self-worth, worthy of reciprocated respect from the Western powers.<sup>49</sup> Predicting that the plebiscite would overwhelmingly demonstrate the public's support for the withdrawal, the *ABC* writer ended by declaring, "there no longer exists in the Reich but one party, and [this party's] energetic gestures that exalt national self-love tend to please the people."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> "No cabe duda de que la medida obedece al temor de una posible agresión por parte de Alemania. El temor es un sentimiento subjetivo que no puede discutirse. Pero otro sentimiento subjetivo es el amor propio. Alemania estima que no puede seguir colaborando en los trabajos de Ginebra si se le trata como potencia de segunda categoría, en la cual no se tiene confianza. Prefiere retirarse, pues, de la Liga de Naciones."

<sup>50</sup> "En cuanto al resultado de las nuevas elecciones, no deja lugar a la menor duda. Ya no existe en el Reich sino un solo partido, y los gestos enérgicos que exaltan el amor propio nacional suelen gustar a los pueblos." "Ante la negativa de los aliados a concederle igualdad de derechos, alemania se retira de la conferencia del desarme y de la sociedad de naciones: Un gesto enérgico," *ABC*, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1933, 35.

Several days later, *ABC* clarified its previous interpretation. The emerging crisis between the allies and Germany was merely the result of a misunderstanding between them.<sup>51</sup> “Certainly, if Germany felt responsible for the [First World War] and considered itself defeated on the battlegrounds” it would accept the conditions of the Treaty with no resistance. *ABC* recognized, however, that “the German public feels innocent” and thinks “the allies owe their victory to the blockade of the Reich, or rather to starvation [hambre] in Germany, as well as the traitorous actions of the socialists and pacifists.” In contrast to how unfairly Germans felt their treatment was, *ABC* suggested the allies felt they had been too gentle with Germany. They could have occupied the country and supported the various separatist movements, but out of concern for causing another socialist revolution they decided against this option. Therefore, the Germans found the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles too harsh, whereas the allies found them too lenient, creating the “lamentable misunderstanding” between the two sides. In the end, *ABC* asked whether there was “still time to rectify the erroneous politics,” hinting at a desire for European stability and possibly respect for both the allies and Germany.<sup>52</sup>

Although *El Socialista* reported on the German decision to withdraw from the League of Nations, its opinion pieces tended to restrain from reacting to the particular event and instead decried fascism more generally and criticized its perceived influence on Spanish politics. In a front-page article on the day of the German announcement, the newspaper declared Germany “the Mecca of neofascism; [the fascism] of Italy no longer appears very barbaric to the madmen of the traditional order,” an apparent reference to the fascist-inspired politicians in Spain. Those

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<sup>51</sup> The term “allies” was used by the Spanish newspapers to refer primarily to France and Britain, the Western powers that had been largely responsible for the Treaty of Versailles, led the League of Nations, and would only later form the Allied powers in the Second World War.

<sup>52</sup> “Boletín del día: Las concesiones hechas a Alemania,” *ABC*, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1933, 35.

looking to “Hitler’s Germany” were labeled “people with a nostalgia for a new Holy Alliance” and dismissed as searching for “the gospel of counterrevolution.” They could find in Germany a double war against Jews and Marxists, and *El Socialista* claimed that there were already “some apostles of anti-Semitism” in Spain.<sup>53</sup> These comments exhibited signs of the Catholic side of the Spanish perspective, albeit within a socialist critique of fascism, through the usage of religious language in their framing of these reports.

Mocking both the Spanish “fascists” (the Falange would not be established until over a week later) and the Nazis, *El Socialista* countered that the problem with Spanish anti-Semitism was that “the large majority of Spaniards have Jewish, or at least Semitic, blood.” This was a good thing, it argued, since the Aryan race was represented by “a Goering, the morphine-addict, a Röhm, the homosexual, or any other sadistic Nazi.”<sup>54</sup> In another brief article, the socialist newspaper took advantage of the Nazi penchant for symbolism as a way to both ridicule them and offer hope to readers for the temporariness of the danger:

A symbolic event. Hitler was in Munich on Sunday to lay the first stone of the new German Institute of Art. In a second ceremony, the Nazi presenter gave the chancellor a silver hammer with which Hitler was supposed to give [the stone] three hits and said that the hammer was to be used continually “as a sign and symbol of the National Socialist power.”

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<sup>53</sup> “Alemania es la Meca del neofascismo; el de Italia no parece ya bastante bárbaro a las [sic] energúmenos del orden tradicional. A la Alemania de Hitler van, por transporte mecánico o en alas de la letra impresa, los que buscan el evangelio de la contrarrevolución, los nostálgicos de una nueva Santa Alianza. La consigna que allí reciben o aprenden es doble: guerra al judío y guerra al marxista, y si el marxista es a la vez judío, doble guerra.”

<sup>54</sup> “El problema del judaísmo, trasplantado a España, es del género bufo. La inmensa mayoría de los españoles tienen sangre, si no judía, por lo menos semita. Aquí apenas hay eso que llaman arios, y a mucha honra, si el prototipo de la raza aria es un Goering, el morfinómano; Rohem, el homosexual, o cualquier otro «nazi» sádico. Mírense en un espejo los propios Maeztu y Baroja, y verán reflejados su rasgos semitas.” “Hombres y partidos: Gil Robles o la caricatura,” *El Socialista*, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1933, 1.

But on the first tap, the symbolic hammer broke into two pieces. Hitler, according to the [news] agencies, lost his composure due to the symbol of Nazi power breaking at the first hit! The “Führer,” who loves to use and abuse symbols: did he see in this incident an ominous sign?<sup>55</sup>

Here *El Socialista* accepted the Nazi emphasis on symbolism and used it in order to mock the Nazis and predict their coming downfall.

Other articles were more serious in nature. *El Socialista* recognized the threat of this version of fascism specifically in an article on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1933 covering a speech given by Gil Robles, the Spanish politician and leader of the CEDA. The article’s subtitle was “An Authentic Speech of Fascism” and indeed, Robles’ speech was presented as the first explicit declaration of fascism in Spain. “Gil Robles, [the] current leader of that *almáciga* of anti-parliamentary, or rather, dictatorial tendencies,” had wanted to clarify that there was no intention of adopting a totalitarian ideology or one based on the Italian or German state.<sup>56</sup> However, he had ended his speech by saying his “generation has been entrusted with a grand mission. It has to create a new spirit, found a new state, a new nation, and leave the patria purified of judaizing masons.” This comment confirmed for *El Socialista* that “this is pure fascism, although of the German strand.”<sup>57</sup>

*F.E.*, the first official newspaper of the Spanish Falange, also addressed the topic of the German withdrawal from the League of Nations in its initial issue, published in December of 1933. As with *El Fascio*, there was little attempt to merely serve as a source of news and instead it explicitly sought to work out the question of what fascism should be for Spain and what values

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<sup>55</sup> “Díptica fascista: El martillo roto,” *El Socialista*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1933, 6.

<sup>56</sup> The Spanish word *almáciga* in this context means a place where seeds are planted so they can be transplanted somewhere else later.

<sup>57</sup> “El discurso de Gil Robles: Una auténtica oración fascista,” *El Socialista*, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1933, 1.

it should promote. In a recurring section titled “Fascist Life,” *F.E.* offered readers a view into the fascist states and events related to the various related movements, with coverage of Italy, Germany, and other countries with more nascent strands of fascism.<sup>58</sup> The section on Germany began with a promise to “give Germany the [coverage] that its fascism,” “the grandeur of this nation in rebirth, and the dignity of Hitler” deserved in the following issue.

Instead, the newspaper discussed the particular German decision to leave the League of Nations. “For us,” argued *F.E.*, “a nation has no higher right than to what it earns each day. Rights are like bread: one must conquer and earn it daily.” Possibly for literary effect using the similarity of the Spanish words “fuerza” and “esfuerzo,” the newspaper claimed that “rights are not strength, but effort. And there are nations that reject bread, [reject] rights! They become archaeological museums . . . that was Greece, that was Cordoban Islam, and that is becoming Spain if we don’t decide to ‘break those urns.’ Germany broke them.”<sup>59</sup> Basing its reasoning on the principle of social Darwinism, *F.E.* defended Germany for its decisions because it was fighting for what it deserved in comparison to lethargic nations like Spain. In the opinion of the Spanish fascists, Germany was to be a role model for other nations wishing to regain strength and power.

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<sup>58</sup> Stanley Payne estimates that 40% of the “Vida fascista” sections in *F.E.* were devoted to Italy and only 10% to Germany. See Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 96.

<sup>59</sup> “Para nosotros, un pueblo no tiene más derecho que aquel que se gana todos los días. El derecho es como el pan: hay que conquistarlo y merecerlo diariamente. El Derecho no es la Fuerza: sino el Esfuerzo. Y hay del pueblo que renuncia al pan, al derecho! Se convierte en Museo arqueológico . . . Eso fué Grecia, y eso fué el Islam corobés, y eso va siendo España si no nos decidimos 'a romper tales urnas'. Alemania las ha roto. . . Y un país que no se resigna a morir y que quiere vivir, y vivir su historia—su pasado en futuro—ese país tiene derecho a todos los derechos . . .” “Vida fascista: Alemania,” *F.E.*, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1933, 8.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### 1934: Reactions to Nazism Put into Perspective

At the end of 1933, the Spanish public voted into office a new republican government to the right of center whose goal was to reverse as many of the progressive policies that had previously been implemented as possible. There was also increasing concern that the new president, Alejandro Lerroux, would form a coalition that would cater to the perceived radical right. This fear would be proven correct in October 1934 when three members of CEDA were admitted into the cabinet. Within this context, the Spanish press reached its highest level of interest in German and Nazi-related affairs, mostly positive for the conservative newspapers and negative for the socialist one. At the same time that the fascist newspapers and *ABC* praised elements of Nazism and Hitler, however, other events and aspects of the German experience were brought to the foreground of the discussion. In the case of *ABC*, the deaths of Engelbert Dollfuss of Austria and German President Paul von Hindenburg revealed the Spanish conservative preference for more traditional forms of authoritarianism over right-wing fascism. For the Spanish fascists, Nazi Germany remained a role model in certain aspects but also a measuring-stick by which to define a particularly Spanish version of fascism.



### ***F.E.: Nazis and Jews (January, 1934)***

Early in January, the Spanish fascists published an anonymous article within the “Fascist Life” section of *F.E.* with the title “Germany: Nazis and Jews.”<sup>60</sup> *F.E.* began by declaring that “the most characteristic distinction of German fascism is without a doubt: ‘anti-Semitism.’” This distinguished it from both the Italian and Spanish versions. *F.E.* clarified for readers that there was indeed a “Jewish problem,” which it promised to discuss in a later issue as it related to Spain. However, “for Spain, the Jewish problem has not been nor will ever be one of race, but [one] of faith.” As proof, the newspaper pointed to “the ease and joy with which traditionalists, also called the ‘right,’ admit into their bosom enemy people . . . who are later friends as soon as they commit a simple act of faith. Spain tolerates the convert very easily . . . without ever looking at the color of the skin, the shape of the nose or the ears.”

*F.E.* went even further to emphasize the Spanish lack of racism by calling the “supposed Latin race” a false and pedantic conception. Addressing the celebration of Columbus Day, which in Spanish refers to a celebration of the Spanish/Latin race, the periodical wrote “our paradoxical ‘Fiesta de la Raza’ . . . means the opposite in reality. Spain mixed with all the races with no racist or unitary sense and with no prejudice.” As an explanation for this, it suggested that this characteristic stemmed from religion, since “the essence of Catholicism is anti-racist.”

The only two groups who made race a fundamental aspect of their ideology and politics from *F.E.*’s perspective were the Aryans and the Jews, who both “base their historical sense on ‘blood.’” This explained the extreme hostility between the two groups, since this clash was not a new phenomenon but a historic one. From this viewpoint, Hitler was seen as merely the reviver

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<sup>60</sup> José Antonio Primo de Rivera argued along a similar line and may have even been the article’s anonymous writer. See Michael Seidman, *The Victorious Counterrevolution* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 197.

of this “anti-brown, anti-Semitic instinct,” which had brought about “blonde ‘Protestantism’ versus the Roman religion during the time of the other Hitler named ‘Luther.’” *F.E.*

acknowledged that both sides had legitimate arguments for hating each other. On the one hand, the Jews had been responsible for socialism, communism, and the international movement opposed to Hitler and the Nazis. On the other hand, the Germans were continually blaming and persecuting the Jews for their perceived “enslaving of the country since 1918.”

Despite the imaginary significance of the Jewish problem on the part of the Nazis, *F.E.* admired Hitler for being “an Aryan-Hero,” a “Teutonic knight,” and a “medieval knight” fighting against his enemies.<sup>61</sup> This article exemplifies the willingness of the Spanish fascists to criticize or dismiss aspects of the German case in order to develop a particular version of fascism better suited for their own nation while still viewing the Nazis as potential role models for the process of national rebirth.

### **Röhm Putsch (June-July, 1934)**

Turmoil in Spain grew significantly with the failure of the conservative republican government to satisfy any of the Spanish factions on either side of the ideological spectrum. Leftist groups throughout Spain increased their protests and both radical left and right groups began violently expressing their discontent toward each other. In contrast, the Nazi government was able to establish a certain level of stability in Germany. In response to increasing Nazi aggression toward groups such as the Jews and communists, as well as a continued push for socialist revolution from party radicals in the S.A., the Nazi paramilitary unit, Hitler chose to restrain the party’s more radical impulses for political expediency. At the end of June 1934,

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<sup>61</sup> “Vida fascista: Alemania: Nazis y Judíos,” *F.E.*, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 8.

Hitler conducted a purge of many S.A. members, having them and other rival politicians murdered in what was later called the Röhm Putsch or the Night of the Long Knives. This was done under the pretense that Ernst Röhm, the S.A. captain, and other S.A. members were planning on overthrowing Hitler and taking control of power.

As seen previously, *El Socialista* was becoming increasingly hostile in its responses to events related to Nazi Germany. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, the paper included an article titled “Fascist Corruption” in which the events in Germany were strongly condemned. Mocking the admiring phrase of a daily newspaper belonging to the aforementioned leader of the CEDA, Gil Robles, *El Socialista* claimed that the corruption of Nazi fascism, the ideology Gil Robles had claimed would renew “all moral and spiritual values,” was now on display for the world to see.<sup>62</sup> In another article titled “Behind the Hitlerian Mask,” the paper astutely rejected the story of the supposed coup attempt as a false pretense under which Hitler could eliminate the members of his party who continued to push for the fulfillment of Nazi propaganda and program promises.<sup>63</sup> One final article from July 5<sup>th</sup> presented the term “gangsterism” from a British newspaper to describe the policy and behavior of the Nazi Party. At the end of the article, *El Socialista* criticized the Spanish Catholic newspaper *El Debate* for praising the Nazis in 1933, when the only victims were Marxist workers, but now condemning them because of the assassination of the leader of the Catholic Action in Berlin.<sup>64</sup>

In stark contrast to the harsh reporting by *El Socialista*, *ABC*’s writers accepted the official narrative with no sign of doubt or skepticism and instead dedicated many pages to the

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<sup>62</sup> “Nota internacional: Podredumbre fascista,” *El Socialista*, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1934, 6.

<sup>63</sup> “Nota internacional: Bajo la Máscara Hitleriana,” *El Socialista*, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1934, 6.

<sup>64</sup> “Nota internacional: La 'incógnita' de Von Papen,” *El Socialista*, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 6.

defense or positive portrayal of Nazi Germany. Eugenio Montes, the writer and journalist for *ABC* based in Berlin at the time, was one such defender of Hitler and Nazi Germany. He had earned a doctorate degree in Philosophy and Literature while studying under José Ortega y Gasset and had later become a licensed lawyer only to then turn to journalism, and his background as an academic and literary specialist would greatly influence his complex and poetic writing on Germany. He wrote for several newspapers, including *ABC*, *La Epoca*, *El Sol*, and *El Debate*, later joining the Falange and contributing to its newspapers as well.<sup>65</sup> He became the primary correspondent covering Germany for *ABC* and would continue to defend Germany through 1936.

In an article published the day of the purge, Eugenio Montes countered the arguments put forth by Francisco de Asís Cambó, a Spanish conservative politician and the head of the Catalan Lliga Regionalista Party. The politician had claimed that countries such as France and Britain were rich because they were liberal, and countries such as Italy and Germany were poor because they were dictatorships. Montes responded that this was an inaccurate claim because it had reversed the causes and effects: those dictatorships emerged, he argued, because of the impoverished conditions that create instability and insecurity, whereas liberalism existed in countries that were naturally stable because of their wealth. Montes then argued that dictatorships were not a panacea and that even Hitler's "romantic and democratic" dictatorship might not solve Germany's problems. He wrote that dictatorships are, however, the key to possible salvation. Montes therefore underscored the need for a dictatorship in Spain for its own redemption.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> "Ha muerto el escritor y académico Eugenio Montes," *ABC*, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1982, 45.

<sup>66</sup> Eugenio Montes, "*ABC* en Berlín: 'Ancilla ploutocratiae'" *ABC*, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 3-4.

On the day after the Röhm-Putsch, *ABC* wrote that “Germany is not in a state to permit itself the luxury of dangerous social experiments,” suggesting its support of the elimination of the radical factions in the Nazi Party.<sup>67</sup> In yet another article, Eugenio Montes stated as a fact that Hitler had known there was a plot against him and had moved quickly to prevent it. When Göring reported finding conspiratorial plans to overthrow Hitler with the assistance of an unnamed foreign country, Montes assured readers it must have been a reference to Russia.<sup>68</sup> On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, *ABC* published an additional article written by Montes in an attempt to explain the motivation for both Röhm’s supposed desire to overthrow Hitler and Hitler’s delay in eliminating him and the other radicals in the party. Montes began by stating that the German people owed Hitler their gratitude for having saving them from the socialist threat. He then described the Führer as a romantic, realistic, and tolerant leader who was too generous in his interactions with the S.A. Whereas Montes admired Hitler for being modest and honorable, he depicted Röhm in a negative fashion: he was hedonistic, greedy, cruel, etc. Montes portrayed Hitler as an innocent and naïve leader who was being taken advantage of by “bad” people like Röhm.<sup>69</sup> Thus, not only did *ABC* accept the official explanation for the Röhm-Putsch, its writers felt the need to defend Hitler and his actions.

Finally, *ABC*’s writers took a step further with what must be considered the most fawning and romanticized instance of its reporting on Nazi Germany. In the July 4<sup>th</sup> issue of its

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<sup>67</sup> “Ha sido vencida el ala izquierda del hitlerismo,” *ABC*, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1934, 29.

<sup>68</sup> “*ABC* en Berlín: Sedición de jefes de los S. A. contra Hitler. El canciller se anticipa a la sedición y la sofoca. Han sido fusilados siete jefes de las milicias nacional-socialistas. Muerte del general von Schleicher. El Gobierno domina absolutamente la situación,” *ABC*, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1934, 29; “*ABC* en Berlín: Noticias oficiales,” *ABC*, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1934, 29.

<sup>69</sup> Eugenio Montes, “*ABC* en Berlín: Roehm tenía la obsession de substituir a Hitler. Baja catadura moral de aquél. Cosas que necesitan explicación,” *ABC*, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1934, 21.

newspaper, *ABC* dedicated a full ten-pages to the glorification of Germany, including a photo on its front-cover and a six-page spread found outside of the normal international news section. Within those six pages, Eugenio Montes and César González-Ruano used romanticized literary narratives as a way to understand the political and social situation in Germany.

González-Ruano offered the story of Orestes from Greek mythology as a parallel to the so-called Röhm-Putsch. In the Greek story, when Orestes was still a baby, his father Agamemnon went away to war, and during this time his wife took a new lover. When Agamemnon returned, she concocted a plot with her paramour to murder her husband. When Orestes grew older, he was compelled by the Oracle of Delphi to avenge his father's death and he therefore killed both his mother and her lover.<sup>70</sup> In González-Ruano's retelling of the story, Hitler played the "just [justo] and enlightened" role of Orestes, and Röhm took the part of the familial figure that betrays him. Hitler, also referred to directly by the writer as Orestes, was forced to kill Röhm as vengeance for his betrayal. González-Ruano suggested this retelling would resonate with Spanish audiences because of their sensitive "latinicity" for myths.<sup>71</sup>

Immediately following this literary piece was an article by Eugenio Montes defending the successes of National Socialism in establishing order and peace within Germany. He wrote that any traveler staying in Germany would be reasonably expected to communicate with the German people and find out information about the perceived "difficulties of the time" regarding the political and social situation under Nazi rule.<sup>72</sup> Upon finding that there was a near unanimous

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch's Mythology* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2006), 218-219.

<sup>71</sup> "[N]uestra latinidad sensible al mito." César González-Ruano, "El Gesto," *ABC*, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 4-5.

<sup>72</sup> He listed among these troubles: "the economic crisis, the crisis of liberalism, [and] authoritarian governments." However, his use of the phrase "difficulties of the time" in

approval of Nazi economic policy and a general approval of at least parts of the National Socialist ideology, Montes wrote that one would ask in surprise where all the socialists had gone. In his answer to this question, he compared the socialists to the lost city of Atlantis, declaring that either they had been totally submerged (presumably by the wave of Nazi fascism) or they remained only in isolated islands. In response to the same question but about the communists, Montes answered that they had become S.A. members. The Nazis had “imposed a vital reaction to tame and contain [that] violent collision of [those] destructive forces.” Montes highlighted the transformation of the previously rebellious Marxists into S.A. members exemplifying the values of uniformity, discipline, and subservience to the state as a sign of the Nazi success. He thus offered Germany as an example that Spain should adopt to deal with their similar problem of radicalism on the left.<sup>73</sup> These two articles from César González-Ruano and Eugenio Montes in *ABC* most explicitly exhibit the growing fanaticism and admiration of Nazi Germany from the conservative newspaper and represent perhaps the pinnacle of its enthusiasm.

The Falange newspaper’s portrayal of the Röhm Putsch paralleled *ABC*’s positive interpretation. In an article called “Storm over Germany,” *F.E.* praised Hitler for doing what was necessary to remove revolutionary factions from his party and also used romantic language to describe the event. “Full of poetry, of a mysticism perhaps too immediate, national-socialism had to confront its obstacles” in order to accomplish its gigantic task of reconstructing Germany. The radical leftist members of the party had prepared for revolution and in doing so, threatened to knock Hitler off-course from his goals. “Loyal to himself, to his confessed vocations, and to the imperatives of national action,” Hitler had to stop this faction in order to maintain stability

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quotation marks seems to reveal both his recognition and dismissal of the problematic nature of the Nazi regime.

<sup>73</sup> Eugenio Montes, “*ABC* en Berlín: Lo que va de ayer a hoy,” *ABC*, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 6-7.

within Germany. This group of conspirators “fell as payment for their infidelity,” providing a lesson for Germany: that it must fight to survive if it wants “the carriage of the Third Reich to get out of the quagmires into which it has sunk.”

This article exhibits the overlap of interpretations of the Röhm Putsch between *F.E.* and *ABC*. Both highlighted the need for Hitler to quash a dangerous Marxist revolutionary force within his party for the survival of the country and continued success of its regeneration. This event was also framed in flowery language, with the use of metaphor perhaps playing into the so-called “latinicity” of readers. Yet despite the high praise for Hitler’s actions, even the fascist newspaper briefly admitted a preference for another German political leader: Franz von Papen, the former chancellor who had worked behind the scenes to convince President Paul von Hindenburg to grant Hitler power with Papen as his vice-chancellor. In detailing the previous leaders who had struggled to keep Germany from falling apart, *F.E.* wrote “Papen represented the spirit of the best Germany: Catholic, strongly rooted in the traditions of Germanic vigor and sturdiness, skilled in the game of political tug-of-war. In his time as chancellor, he served the currents of the resurrection of the national impetus like no one else.”<sup>74</sup> As will be seen, *ABC* writers would also reveal a preference for right-wing leaders with values closer to those held by Spanish conservatives.

### **Assassination of Engelbert Dollfuss (July, 1934)**

On July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1934, a group of Austrian Nazis attempted to overthrow the “Christian-Social” regime of Engelbert Dollfuss in what is now known as the July Putsch. Their goal was to replace Dollfuss’ government with a National Socialist one in the hopes of an eventual

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<sup>74</sup> “Noticiero del mundo: Tempestad sobre Alemania,” *F.E.* July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 5.



unification with Germany. In the process, the conspirators managed to assassinate him but failed to overthrow the government.<sup>75</sup>

The July Putsch provided the Spanish media with a new interpretive challenge. Whereas in previous reporting on Nazi-related events journalists had either focused on German affairs exclusively or merely in contrast to the allies, the failed coup offered a comparison between two authoritarian dictatorships. The resulting accounts and perspectives of the Spanish conservative newspaper suggest a less favorable view of Nazism in the face of a more traditional and Catholic right-wing ideology.

*ABC*'s op-ed piece the day after the assassination made the extent of the periodical's admiration for Dollfuss clear. His assassination was described as a "tragic death," and he was hailed a "martyr of his duty" (*martir de su deber*). *ABC* justified his authoritarianism, writing "it cannot be denied that Dollfuss governed with dictatorial methods: he evaded the general elections because he knew that he could not gain a majority in them." This was because the Austrian voters were divided into three groups: one supporting the Dollfuss regime; another composed of socialists, and a final third that was what *ABC* referred to as "hitlerist," or National Socialist. According to the op-ed piece, Dollfuss "may have preferred to remain loyal to the parliamentary democracy, which had been the program of his party, the Christian-Social, but the circumstances pushed him toward dictatorship." For *ABC* and, by extension, its conservative Spanish readers, Dollfuss' Christian-Social program, implemented in the form of a traditional

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<sup>75</sup> Dollfuss and his regime are considered by some scholars today as Austrofascist in nature, and some of the members of his Christian Social party used the term fascist to describe themselves, albeit sparingly. However, the Spanish press did not consider them fascist at the time. I have therefore chosen to make a distinction between Dollfuss as a traditional authoritarian in opposition to the radical Austrian Nazis. For more, see Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 248 and Julie Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933-1938* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

dictatorship, shared a closer kinship to the Catholic and traditional authoritarian inclinations of the Spanish than the Nazis' radical dictatorship opposed to religion and monarchy. The op-ed piece ended by lamenting that "[t]he tragic episode . . . deprive[d] that country of a great ruler, whose patriotism was always attentive, with zeal and with wisdom, to defend the national integrity and independence at the cost of major sacrifices, including that of his life." Based on this argument, *ABC* posited that dictatorships are justifiable or even desirable if they serve to combat the threat of communism and especially if they defend the status quo, anticipating the traditionalist dictatorship of General Francisco Franco following the Spanish Civil War.<sup>76</sup>

Later issues of *ABC* also connected its respect for Dollfuss with its traditional view of the military and its concern for stability. On the July 27<sup>th</sup> *ABC* cover, the newspaper printed a single, large photo of Dollfuss smiling warmly, with his head appearing as a cutout with no background. The caption to the photo informed readers that he had been the victim of a Nazi uprising "after saving the country from anarchy" "by virtue of his valor and patriotism."<sup>77</sup> Later in the issue, one of the headline articles by Andres Revesz, a Hungarian journalist and writer working in Spain for *ABC* and *Acción Española*, was titled "The Technique of the Coup D'état" and critiqued the failed Nazi overthrow attempt in Austria. In line with the general trend of Spanish faith in the military as a protector of the state and the basis for legitimate change in government,<sup>78</sup> Revesz wrote that "the romantic period of coups [had] ended forever. The state [el poder público] is in command of the situation and can resist any popular uprising as long as it

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<sup>76</sup> "Trágicos acontecimientos en Austria. Un grupo de «nazis» sublevados irrumpen en la cancillería y mata a tiros al canciller Dollfuss," *ABC*, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 17.

<sup>77</sup> *ABC*, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 1.

<sup>78</sup> Phillips, *A Concise History of Spain*, 280, 314.

is open to spilling blood, opposing the members of the revolt with armed force.” Instead, Revesz argued that any successful coup thereafter must be backed by the military. He gave the Bolshevik Revolution as a striking and counter-intuitive example of an overthrow that had succeeded because of the support of the military: “The fact that Lenin was the head of the extreme left did not impede him from having more confidence in the riotous soldiers than in the revolutionary workers.”<sup>79</sup> He concluded that the “tragic events” in Austria should serve as a warning to European leaders that they must recognize this transformation of the conduct of coups in order to increase their defensive capabilities.<sup>80</sup> Revesz’ article reflected the Spanish perception of the military as a force for stability and the protector of the state, and hinted at *ABC*’s aversion to popular uprisings.

Eugenio Montes, who had previously expressed his admiration for Nazi Germany and the Hitler regime, would similarly highlight his preference for Dollfuss and the Christian-Social political ideology over National Socialism. Several days after the assassination, Montes provided a romanticized account of both his travel to and witnessing of Dollfuss’ funeral. He wrote of the picturesque views of the Austrian countryside he had witnessed, with its “village houses with red roofs through which, slow and early, the rural smoke of breakfast emerges.”<sup>81</sup> In contrast with this idyllic scene, “the [Nazi] revolutionaries appear as they really are: a craziness

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<sup>79</sup> “El hecho de encabezar la extrema izquierda no impidió que Lenin tuviera más confianza en los militares amotinados que en los obreros revolucionarios.”

<sup>80</sup> Andres Revesz, “La técnica del golpe de estado,” *ABC*, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 3.

<sup>81</sup> “. . . casitas aldeanas con tejas rojas por las que sale, lento y madrugador, el humo rural del desayuno.”

that is born and dies in the underworld of cities;” “a craziness, or better yet, a crime with the least contact with what is most profound, enduring, and rural [de aldeano] in homelands.”<sup>82</sup>

To further emphasize his disapproval of the Nazi coup, Montes cited the obituary given by Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg, leader of the Heimwehr under Dollfuss, in which the deceased Austrian chancellor was characterized as “an eternally lit flame,” “dying for civilization, for peace, and the dignity of the world.” Starhemberg continued, “Austria today is Europe’s barricade . . . against international bolshevism, which has the sincerity and courage to call itself [international], and against the other [threat] which hides and disguises itself—although no one is fooled anymore—with the term national.”<sup>83</sup> In alluding to the National Socialist threat to Austrian independence, the Viennese writer equated the threat of communism with the threat of Nazism. Whether or not Montes agreed regarding this equivalency is unclear, but he did not contest the statement. Instead, he simply responded that “these strong [duro] words sound[ed] like a hammer,” adding to his lamentation.<sup>84</sup>

Montes’ final descriptions of Dollfuss in his coffin reemphasized his admiration for the Austrian dictator and appealed to the religious side of Spanish readers. Describing Dollfuss’ resting position, Montes saw his “hands crossed as if in prayer,” and his face had a “beatified expression [along with] the smell of wax, of prayer, and sainthood, as the Franciscan Saints must

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<sup>82</sup> “los revolucionarios parecen lo que en realidad son: una locura que nace y muere en los bajos fondos de las ciudades. Una locura o, quizá mejor, un crimen, sin el menor contacto con lo que hay de profundo, de perdurable y de aldeano, en las patrias.”

<sup>83</sup> “Austria es hoy la barricada de Europa contra todos los bolchevismos. Contra el bolchevismo internacional, que tiene la sinceridad y el coraje de llamarse así, y contra aquel otro que se oculta y se disfraza—aunque, ya no engañe a nadie— con el nombre de nacional. En nuestra lucha contra los bárbaros del siglo XX nos sigue lo más noble del mundo entero. Somos el espíritu de la tradición europea contra la demagogia nacional-socialista.”

<sup>84</sup> “Me van sonando como un martillo estas palabras duras. . .”

have had.” In reference to his short stature, Montes called Dollfuss “minimal and sweet” while living, and “now in the coffin, he seems *grande*,” a word which in Spanish means great, grand, and/or large. Montes ended the article claiming Dollfuss had died like a hero and like a saint.<sup>85</sup>

In the July 31<sup>st</sup> issue of *ABC*, Federico Santander criticized the juvenile militias who he deemed responsible for both the assassination of Dollfuss and that of Kurt von Schleicher during the Röhm Putsch. Demonstrating the traditionalism of Spanish conservatives, Santander argued against “entrusting the direction of the public destiny to the impetuous inexperience of adolescents.” He acknowledged that “gerontocracies are bad, but paedocracies are even worse” because they replace “the most essential aspect of the state, the defense of rights,” with “blind and frenetic” action.<sup>86</sup> For Santander, the stability of older political actors was preferable to the passionate radicalism of the youth, as exemplified for him by the Nazis.

Finally, in an article called “Remembering Dollfuss,” Manuel Bueno suggested a parallel between Austria and Spain as two nations in decline. Because his writing reflects the extent of his disappointment and disgust with the newfound republic in Spain, it is worth reprinting at length:

In Austria, the political crisis looks very much like the one from which we are suffering in Spain since the Monarchy allowed itself to be supplanted by the current regime. No one is happy. The nation has not changed its spirit and yet it has broken with the past without being sure of what can be expected from the future. By chance, does an Austrian collective unconscious exist? Does that nice [simpático] nation feel that dignity [that is] a bit aggressive which characterizes other countries, such as England and France . . . ? If someone were to ask me [about Spain], I would answer, without a doubt, negatively. The national lack of dynamism is so evident here. . . that only the optimistic blind person of those who have renounced the use of intelligence as a critical instrument can believe in a rebirth of our disgraced patria.

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<sup>85</sup> Eugenio Montes, “*ABC* en Viena: Dollfuss en el féretro,” *ABC*, July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 23; Ibid, “*ABC* en Viena: Murió en olor de multitud,” *ABC*, July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 23.

<sup>86</sup> “Mala es la gerontocracia, pero la paidocracia es mucho peor.” Federico Santander, “Milicias juveniles,” *ABC*, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1934, 4.

Bueno continued to criticize the Spanish nation by asking whether Spain and Austria might belong to the group of previous nations that had been established on Earth with a mission, and once accomplished, decline and die. He believed that Spain and Austria had entered the “sad pre-senile period” of declining energy and that Austria had lost its “paladin for a cause,” Dollfuss, when he was needed most. Most likely in relation to the suspicion that Hitler was behind the assassination, Bueno insulted the German leader by claiming, “Hitler is decidedly inferior to his mission.” As an “enlightened figure,” he could only succeed in the work of propaganda, but in practice, stumbled at every step. In one final stab, Bueno wrote that “[i]f Fichte . . . were to be resuscitated, he would not accept [admitir] Hitler as even an interlocutor.”<sup>87</sup> By being forced to confront the possibility of the assassination of a leader more in line with Spanish conservative values at the hands of another, more distant, right-wing leader, Bueno went further than other writers for *ABC* in wholly denouncing Hitler.

Altogether, *ABC*’s reactions to the Dollfuss assassination offer a clearer picture of the Spanish relationship with Nazism as a political inspiration. Although enthusiastic about the rise of Hitler and the Nazis during the first months of 1933 through the beginning of 1934, and generally supportive of the German regime, *ABC*’s writers expressed their preference for more traditional authoritarian figures like Dollfuss and for his Christian-based ideology. By being forced to report on and interpret the clash between one right-wing movement versus another, those Spanish writers tended to emphasize the radicalism and threat of National Socialism more than in previous articles and instead praised the more stable and traditional dictatorship of Dollfuss.

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<sup>87</sup> Manuel Bueno, “Recordando a Dollfuss,” *ABC*, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 4.



Figure 4 “Dollfuss in Heaven” (*El Socialista*, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1934)

In stark contrast to *ABC*’s praising tone, *El Socialista* issued acerbic attacks against the Austrian chancellor in large part because it recognized the Spanish conservative attraction to Dollfuss and his political ideology. In a report published a day after his assassination, the socialist paper called the event an act of justice on behalf of the “popular hatred” toward Dollfuss, the “bloody dwarf,” “hangman,” and “criminal.” Unlike *ABC*’s defense of his dictatorial measures, *El Socialista* criticized his “cold Jesuit cruelty in the hanging of the Austrian proletariat” and claimed he only represented a small minority within the Austrian public. Emphasizing the extent to which Dollfuss served as a model for Gil Robles, the paper

argued that “the Austrian public was demonstrating more strongly its rejection of the Vaticanist regime that Gil Robles and his allies . . . dream of imposing on Spain.”<sup>88</sup>

Additionally, a political cartoon by Arrirubi on July 28<sup>th</sup> repeated the religious critique of Dollfuss. Depicting the Austrian leader as a pudgy angel up in the sky or heaven, the caption read “Advantages of being Catholic” with Dollfuss saying “now I can see from here the mess [fregao] that I left behind down below” (Figure 4).<sup>89</sup> Within the same issue, *El Socialista* connected the political instability at the time with the situation in Europe just prior to the beginning of the First World War. Whereas in 1914 Europe faced the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, in 1934 the Spanish socialists expected the murder of Dollfuss to be the turning point for European peace.<sup>90</sup> Just like *ABC*, *El Socialista*’s response to the Austrian chancellor’s death would mirror its reaction to Hindenburg’s death shortly thereafter.

### **Death of Hindenburg (August, 1934)**

Just days after the events in Austria, Germany lost its final major connection to the Weimar Republic with the death of President Paul von Hindenburg on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1934. The successful military general had reluctantly appointed Hitler as chancellor with the hope that the latter could be controlled from behind the scenes. Since he was the main figure capable of limiting the chancellor’s power, Hindenburg’s passing created a new opportunity for Hitler to combine the positions of chancellor and president into a single dictatorial position as Führer of the Reich.

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<sup>88</sup> “El enano sangriento Dollfuss ha sido muerto por sus rivales: Ha muerto un verdugo,” *El Socialista*, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 6.

<sup>89</sup> Arrirubi, “Dollfuss en el cielo,” *El Socialista*, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 3.

<sup>90</sup> “Capicúa trágico?: 1914—julio—1934,” *El Socialista*, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 1.



Yet despite Hitler's success in finally completing his establishment as dictator, this was not highlighted in *ABC*'s opinion pieces. Instead, the conservative newspaper found a more note-worthy figure in Hindenburg. Among his appealing attributes were: his lifelong dedication to his country as a soldier in the Prussian Army, a Field Marshall in the Reichswehr during World War I, and President of the Weimar Republic until his death; his traditionalism; and his anti-Marxist authoritarianism. When faced with an alternative right-wing figure to Hitler, *ABC* again found Hindenburg to be the preferable choice of the two.

Within the span of a week, the newspaper had dedicated roughly eleven of its pages to photos glorifying Hindenburg and honoring him in death. Among these were pictures of Hindenburg interacting with German troops, speaking to the youth of the so-called "new Germany," and shaking hands with a deferential Hitler with his head bowed at the Day of Potsdam from 1933. The captions emphasized Hindenburg's significance, claiming that "all the glories of today's Germany are incarnated in him" and that he had sought to pass on to the German youth their sense of duties for the future and a "respectful cult of tradition."<sup>91</sup>

An article published the day after his death depicted *ABC*'s difficulty in deciding which aspect of Hindenburg's character and life it admired more. "If he had disappeared before 1914" either by remaining in retirement or because the First World War had not occurred, "countless people would [still] know his name." The paper identified his military consciousness, bravery, and sternness on the level of a paternal figure as traits making him the ideal Prussian soldier. As president of Germany, he "had been both a constitutional and impeccable head of state, which no one could deny." With his death, "Germany [lost] its most prestigious son who had saved it

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<sup>91</sup> *ABC*, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1934, 8-9; "Recuerdos de la vida del mariscal Hindenburg," *ABC*, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 4-7; *ABC*, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 9-10; *ABC*, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 55; *ABC*, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 8-9.

many times from the most difficult situations.” Further, Hindenburg had successfully transformed himself from “glorious military leader of war” to “herald of peace” as leader of a republic. The article ended with a lamentation for his death, writing poetically that “Spain bows to the memory of the most grand of the Germans and accompanies this friend nation with sincere sentiment in its profound pain.”<sup>92</sup>

A few days later, Álvaro Alcalá Galiano would also write a panegyric on Hindenburg, along with French general Hubert Lyautey, who had died a few days earlier. Praising Lyautey for the creation of French Morocco but considering his fame particular to France, Alcalá claimed Hindenburg was, in contrast, a “historical figure” and universal role model. Repeating *ABC*’s inability to find fault in his character, he wrote that “it was not clear what to admire in him more: the grand military leader, victor of Tannenberg . . . the citizen who sacrifices his intimate convictions to govern the political destiny of Germany, or the modest man, austere, secluded in his home.” Citing Hindenburg’s memoirs, Alcalá praised the poetry of his accounts, along with the evocation of “his love of the family, the military, and the Patria,” and later complimented his loyalty to the former Kaiser in asking for permission before running for president in 1925. Finally, Hindenburg was excused for the failure of the Republic and the rise of Hitler’s dictatorship because “Hindenburg knew how to embody the *imperial* spirit of the Germany of Bismarck until the end.”<sup>93</sup> Alcalá’s article thus highlighted Hindenburg’s patriotism and loyalty to the old empire over his service to the Weimar Republic.

Alternately, Ramiro de Maetzu, the editor of *Acción Española*, a Maurrasian journal for the radical right, held up Hindenburg’s traditionalism, subservience, and anti-Marxist actions as

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<sup>92</sup> “Semblanza del mariscal-presidente: El estadista,” *ABC*, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1934, 17.

<sup>93</sup> Álvaro Alcalá Galiano, “Dos grandes caudillos,” *ABC*, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 3.

his most valuable traits. For Maetzu, Hindenburg had been “a rock,” “the only thing fixed in a fluctuating world.” He explained Hindenburg’s willingness to serve his nation as the result of having grown up in a monarchy, given that such a system “educat[ed] men in the spirit of service.” Contrarily, democracies “encourage [people] to be free, to be masters” and therefore, when they are permitted to do what they want, they do not serve at all. Hindenburg was praised for being ready when he was needed to save the German frontlines, when he had to ally himself with the first president of the Weimar Republic, and when he had to serve as president himself.

On the topic of Hindenburg’s fight against communism, Maetzu argued that the Western powers had failed to acknowledge and thank Germany for serving as the “secular sentinel on the frontlines of the East” against the “communist barbarism and misery,” from which the West deserved to suffer for their ingratitude. He criticized the “incompetent politicians [political castros] of Versailles” for not considering the possible longevity of Russian communism, and he called on the West to “do justice to Germany” by giving “its population plenty of space to be able to live” in exchange for their anti-communist services.<sup>94</sup>

In regard to the news from Germany that there would be a plebiscite in order to combine the offices of president and chancellor into one position, *ABC* repeatedly interpreted this action as a return to monarchy and not the beginning of a new phase of a more total dictatorship. “It cannot be denied that Germany has transformed from Res-public to Mon-archy [sic], in the etymological meaning of the word: a government of one.” This was not, however, “pointed out

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<sup>94</sup> Ramiro de Maetzu, “Hindenburg,” *ABC*, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 4-5.

to form a critique” but instead simply emphasized for readers that the largest nation in Europe (excluding Russia) had become a monarchy once again.<sup>95</sup>

Eugenio Montes agreed with this interpretation in an article praising both Hindenburg and Dollfuss. He described them as “two characters, two personalities, [with] two patrias, and one true heroism.” In the case of Germany, Montes acknowledged that “National Socialism is by no means the old regime; it is . . . a new cycle, period, circle.” However, he argued that if one “follows a circumference, what occurs is that the more we progress, the more we return to the point of departure, the initial point.” In his view, Germany had returned to this point of “an elective and plebiscitary Monarchy” because Hitler was asking for the public’s support in naming him king of the nation. Montes was certain that the public would grant this request and hoped fate would be as charitable to Hitler as the German people had been.<sup>96</sup>

An additional article by Antonio Goicoechea, one of the leaders of the monarchist Renovación Española party, restated this understanding of the German political situation in an article connecting Spain’s weak Republic to the rest of Europe. He argued that the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces in Spain had been radicalizing in the post-WWI period. As he presented it, “the revolutionary currents in 1931, lacking sufficient resistance in the Spanish nation, proclaimed the Republic in the joyful and gullible ease of the 14<sup>th</sup> of April.” At the time of writing, Goicoechea claimed that the republican government had devolved into a “formless and opportunist conglomerate” that was threatening the national future with its turn to authoritarianism in order to bring back the revolution. Here the examples of Italy, Austria, and

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<sup>95</sup> “El plebiscito del día 19 conferirá a Hitler poderes ilimitados: Una república menos,” *ABC*, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 19.

<sup>96</sup> Eugenio Montes, “*ABC* en Berlín: La gran confederación de angustia. Consecuencia de la muerte de Hindenburg,” *ABC*, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 39.

Germany were offered as keys to a solution for this problem. Despite the “powerful . . . republican tendency in the fascism of Benito Mussolini,” Goicoechea argued that Mussolini had respected the traditional and historical structure of Italy by turning to “Monarchy” as the solution for unity and national strength. He claimed that in Austria, the people were also clamoring for monarchy as the only possible defender of the country’s independence. In Germany, “there are whispers that Hindenburg in his will implored for a return to a monarchical form” in order to avoid becoming a party dictatorship. Goicoechea ended by calling for a monarchy based on Catholicism in Spain in order to renew the nation.<sup>97</sup>

In general, despite alternate understandings of Hindenburg as a figure with little substance to his character, such as a “wooden Titan,” *ABC* had nothing but praise for the Field-Marshal.<sup>98</sup> Just as with the coverage of Engelbert Dollfuss’ assassination, the death of Hindenburg presented itself as a chance to compare two leaders on different sides of the right. Again, their interpretations highlight the relativity in Spanish conservative perspectives: early on, when major news coming from Germany involved taking power, undermining democracy, fighting against communism, or dealing with the western powers, *ABC* exhibited an enthusiasm for Hitler and the Nazis. In covering the events related to Dollfuss and Hindenburg, the Nazis were less appealing because it was clearer that they lacked some of the attributes that Spanish conservatives found more attractive in the two deceased leaders. Among these traits were a profound traditionalism, Catholic values, military service, subservience to a monarchy, anti-radicalism, and anti-revolution. From this point on, Nazi Germany would still be perceived

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<sup>97</sup> Antonio Goicoechea, “España, Europa, y la lección de Italia,” *ABC*, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 23.

<sup>98</sup> See John Wheeler Bennett, *Wooden Titan: Hindenburg in Twenty Years of German History, 1914-1934* (New York: W. Morrow & Co., 1936).

positively, but with much less enthusiasm than could be found previously, and as with the other newspapers, coverage would also begin to diminish.

Unlike *ABC*, *El Socialista* rejected the notion of Hindenburg serving the Weimar Constitution and Republic. On its front page the day of his death, the paper announced to its readers that he had fallen ill and was only expected to live a few more hours. It questioned, however, whether he had been truly living at all:

Hindenburg had long reached the perfect incarnation of that decorative figure which democratic and liberal Constitutions appoint as head of State. The Constitution of Weimar traced the outline of the president of the Republic and wanted this silhouette mummified and inert. It continued nailing articles to his whole body and left him buried under the constitutional prose.

If the fact of Hindenburg's role as a political puppet was not bad enough, *El Socialista* reported that, among his last demands, it was rumored that Hindenburg called for a return to monarchy in Germany with the Kaiser given his old position of power. *El Socialista* scoffed at this idea because "in reality, the monarchy was already restored in Germany" under Hindenburg's leadership, since a monarch selects his successor, albeit hereditarily. It argued that "if monarchies are hereditary then Republics can be as well." Surprisingly, though, the socialist newspaper seemed to suggest their own inclusion in the group of legitimate Spanish republicans: "At the time of the creation of *our* Constitution, *we* felt powerfully *enamored* [enamorados] with that of Weimar [*Italics added*]." *El Socialista* thought Spain had unfortunately continued to follow the German path by placing an equally weak regime in power.<sup>99</sup>

This sentiment of condolence for the Weimar Republic was repeated the following day. At the end of an article highlighting their disgust for Hindenburg's anti-communist sentiment and actions, *El Socialista* wrote that "the Cadaver of the Constitution of Weimar could lie

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<sup>99</sup> "Retintín: El testamento de Hindenburg," *El Socialista*, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1934, 1.

together with that of the old field-marshal.”<sup>100</sup> Aside from these comments, the socialist newspaper devoted little space to the Hindenburg death, instead shifting focus to the Führer plebiscite, which it deemed a “pre-fabricated” “farce,” calling the situation the “tragicomedy of Nazi fascism.”<sup>101</sup> Shortly thereafter, with the entrance of several members of the conservative CEDA to the Spanish cabinet in October, *El Socialista* would be shut down by the government for over a year due to the socialist backlash against the conservative alliance. Upon its return in 1936, the paper would pay even less attention to German affairs, in part due to increasing coverage of domestic matters and the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, and would in this way follow a similar trajectory to that of the other newspapers.

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<sup>100</sup> “Nota internacional: La decantada 'lealtad' de Hindenburg,” *El Socialista*, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1934, 6.

<sup>101</sup> “El día 19 se celebrará la farsa del 'plebiscito' en Alemania: Hitler trata de fortalecer su posición vacilante con un 'refrendo popular' fabricado de antemano,” *El Socialista*, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 6; “La tragicomedia del fascismo nazi: Hitler prepara el plebiscito que le hará ‘Reichsführer,’” *El Socialista*, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1934, 6.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### 1935-1936: Waning Interest in the German Political Situation

#### **Saar Plebiscite (January, 1935)**

After the First World War, the newly founded League of Nations had turned the Saar, a heavily industrialized area belonging to Germany on its border with France, into a mandate territory under the League's administration. A vote was then scheduled for the people of the Saar to decide in a plebiscite fifteen years later whether the region would continue as a League of Nations territory, join France, or return to Germany. The overwhelmingly positive results in favor of rejoining Germany caught the international community by surprise and shocked the developing antifascist coalition movements in Spain and elsewhere.

*ABC* provided extensive coverage of the event for Spanish readers, taking up over five pages an issue for several days thereafter. Above all, the plebiscite resonated with the Spanish conservative sense of patriotism and unity of peoples (*pueblos*). Eugenio Montes, having previously reported from Germany and from Vienna for the Dollfuss assassination, briefly relocated to the Saar in order to provide readers with his own account of the voting results. On the day of the plebiscite, he wrote that a return to Germany would be "the only normal and logical" option. In the romantic style typical of Montes, he argued, "a man can live in any place, in any territory, but he does not want to die just anywhere, in just any patria. [He] dies *for* the patria . . . Our lives are like rivers which flow into the patria [emphasis added]." In an emotional expression of his own patriotism, Montes wished that the Spanish Civil Guard had joined the



other international armed forces present to defend the legitimacy and security of the vote. “By no other Corps would it be outmatched,” he argued, “not in international courtesy, not in the perfect posture, nor in its impeccable discipline.” Montes believed Spanish participation would demonstrate to the rest of the world Spain’s ever-lasting “classical discipline.”<sup>102</sup>

On the following day, *ABC* enthusiastically announced that the huge majority of Saar citizens had voted in favor of returning to Germany. Its portrayal of the outcome is significant given that it did not suggest that this was necessarily a reflection of majority support for the Nazi regime. Instead, the vote had been about the nation, with many voting in spite of their opposition to Nazism: “The German patriots have voted with disciplined enthusiasm. With consideration for economics and sometimes their political and social convictions, they have placed their love of nation above governments.” *ABC* also claimed the result should have come as no surprise to France and was expected to improve relations between the two countries instead of damaging them.<sup>103</sup>

In yet another poetic piece, Montes doubled the emphasis on the German sense of patriotism, describing the beauty and peace to which he and the people of the Saar had awoken following the plebiscite. “Everything is so beautiful,” he wrote, “that I would risk judging that the houses, [some] even Marxists yesterday, today awoke with emotion for Patria.” He questioned the banning of nationalist images and symbols by a plebiscitary commission, arguing that it was only natural for patriots to sing the songs of their nation. Addressing the defeat of the left, he explained that Marxists had been overcome with an “irresistible nostalgia” that caused

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<sup>102</sup> Eugenio Montes, “La fecha de hoy es un gran día para el Saar y Alemania: *ABC* en el Saar,” *ABC*, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1935, 33.

<sup>103</sup> “El plebiscito del Saar: El noventa y cinco por ciento del censo del Saar ha emitido sus sufragios en una jornada de ejemplar ciudadanía,” *ABC*, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1935, 15.

them to vote based on patriotism and not politics.<sup>104</sup> His perception of this Marxist transformation suggested a desire for Spaniards of opposing political beliefs to also put ideology aside in support of the Spanish nation and a critique of the Spanish left for not doing so.

Only three days after the vote would *ABC* begin presenting the results as a vote in favor of National Socialism. Addressing previous skepticism of the legitimacy of German plebiscites under Hitler and the Nazis, the newspaper posited that the Saar plebiscite was a clear case of German support for Nazism, with “thousands and thousands of workers . . . having converted from Marxists to National Socialists.”<sup>105</sup> Eugenio Montes furthered the point by claiming that the Hitler dictatorship was democratic in a sense because the vast majority of Germans supported him and his cause. This explained the failure of democratic methods and principles to oppose or hinder him and his mission. Montes expected one final plebiscite to prove his claim: that of the Austrians.<sup>106</sup>

One other writer offered a similar argument but included a cryptic warning for Spanish readers. Ramiro de Maetzu criticized the French for calling for a vote on the Saar’s status. In his view, nothing could prevent the Germans from being reunited, including those of Austria. This was natural since there were “other nations in Europe that love [their] patria as much as [the French].” However, he wrote that “as the political union of the German-speaking people is created, the necessity for Latinos to unite in self-defense is becoming more urgent.” For this

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<sup>104</sup> Eugenio Montes, “*ABC* en el Saar: Con una atmósfera apacible, impresionante por su tranquilidad, el Saar decide su destino con arreglo a su tradición milenaria,” *ABC*, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1935, 16.

<sup>105</sup> “De 528.005 votantes se han declarado en favor de Alemania 477.119; por el ‘statu [sic] quo’ han votado 46.513 y en favor de Francia sólo llegaron los votos a 2.124,” *ABC*, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1935, 17.

<sup>106</sup> Eugenio Montes, “*ABC* en el Saar: La solución alemana es la única solución normal y lógica. Lo que hubiera sido un Saar autónomo,” *ABC*, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1935, 35.

defense of “Latinity versus Germanism,” Maetzu encouraged the Latin community to prepare before it was too late, but offered no other details regarding the predicted clash.<sup>107</sup>

Thus, although members of the Spanish right continued their general defense and positive portrayal of Germany, excitement over Hitler and the Nazi regime specifically had decreased since the 1933-1934 period. In the initial days following the Saar plebiscite, *ABC* tended to emphasize the element of German patriotism behind the vote and mostly downplayed the role of political ideology as a contributing factor. Further, in response to the results, a rare expression of fear of German unity was on display, with it serving as possible motivation for not just Spanish but Latin unity. Unfortunately, Maetzu provided no further details in his article, thereby leaving ambiguous the source of the fear: German unity as a return to a belligerent German empire or an increase of Nazi strength and aggression in particular. Regardless, his warning provided the clearest example of a potential underlying skepticism in Spanish conservative perceptions of Nazi Germany.

### ***Arriba***

The Spanish Falange continued to struggle with developing their own version of fascism, with their newspaper offering mixed messages to its readers. After having been shut down by the government in 1934, *F.E.* had been resurrected under the new title *Arriba* in March of 1935. Within the first two weeks, the Spanish fascists attempted, once again, to establish the

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<sup>107</sup> Presumably, the reference to Latinos in this context referred to at least Spain and Italy, if not their contemporary and former colonies. The *Real Academia Española*’s dictionary of Spanish from 1925 defined “Latino” as, among other related definitions, describing the members of “European nations in which languages derived from Latin are spoken, and of that pertinent to them.” The following edition, published in 1939, included the same entries under the term. The use of the term Latinity [Latinidad] also referred to this. Ramiro de Maetzu, “Después del Saar,” *ABC*, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1935, 3.

uniqueness of their movement. An anonymous writer charged their critics with both calling them a “foreign imitation” and also being close to censuring them for being original.<sup>108</sup> He argued that they were indeed original, since only they could “rescue the originality of Spain, its non-transferable historical conscience, and its unity of destiny.” Portraying the Spanish fascists as a misunderstood group, he wrote that “the whole world has already perfectly understood Italian fascism and German racism,” but no one had thus far managed to understand the Falange. He confidently stated that anyone who did understand it would already be a member because only from within the Falange could it be comprehended. Rejecting any alliance with other Spanish political parties and other variants of fascism abroad, the writer presented the vague Falangist goal of creating “a new present [actualidad] . . . to substitute the one in which we live.”

In addition, the Falangists did not want to be guided by public opinion but to shape it. In a revealing metaphor, the same unnamed writer dismissed public opinion, in reference to a democratic system, as being the “voluble and feminine element in the life of the country.” He compared public opinion to a promiscuous woman needing to be set straight through marriage: “Public opinion, that woman from the well of Samaria, that female with seven husbands or seven [political] parties and at the end . . . ‘party wench,’ needs to be made an honorable woman, well-married, fecund, happy, and strong.”<sup>109</sup> This comment highlights specific elements of the traditionalism and religiosity of Spanish culture at the time. Women were seen as weak and inferior to the strength and power of men, and for the fascists this paralleled the relationship between democracy and monarchy or dictatorship. The reference to the woman from Samaria

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<sup>108</sup> The word “censurar” in Spanish can mean both to censor and censure.

<sup>109</sup> “Hay que hacer de la opinión pública, de esta mujer del pozo de Samaria, de esta hembra de siete maridos o de siete partidos y a fin de fiestas ‘moza de partido’ una mujer honrada, bien casada, fecunda, alegre y fuerte.”

stems from a Biblical story in which a woman told Jesus she had no husband. Jesus confirmed this and stated this was because she had multiple partners and was with a man who was not her husband, presumably reflecting the Christian condemnation of promiscuity.<sup>110</sup> Thus, democracy for the Falange was a promiscuous woman because it allowed for multiple voices to take part in guiding the nation's politics, in contrast to the happily married woman who only answers to one man or the nation under the rule of a king or dictator. *Arriba*'s choice of metaphor demonstrates an appeal to the religious side of traditional Spanish readers and also the use of gender stereotypes the lens through which they sought to understand fascism and Spain's political situation.

The clarity of their metaphor did not translate, however, to their actual purported values as Spanish fascists. The writer provided a reason for the lack of a definition for Spanish fascism: in his view, commenting on the particularities of the country's political situation and offering individual solutions to each of the many problems would be "a waste of time and absolute sterility." This would merely treat the symptoms of a deeper problem. Only a "total remedy" as represented by the Falange could give the country the rebirth it needed.<sup>111</sup>

Despite the reassertion of the Falange's uniqueness, *Arriba* published a few additional articles devoted to Nazism. In March, Álvaro Cruzat wrote an apologetic piece that justified the Nazi persecution of Jews as a necessary part of the German rebirth. Recounting its postwar history, Cruzat framed the implementation of the Treaty of Versailles as the "chain[ing] of the great German nation" at the hands of democracy and called it a "triumph of Judaic-Masonic internationalism." From his point of view, however, fate had fortunately not abandoned

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<sup>110</sup> John 4:15-17 (King James Version).

<sup>111</sup> "Actualidad y libertad," *Arriba*, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1935, 1.

Germany because it had given the nation its savior, Adolf Hitler, along with his movement of National Socialism, ultimately leading to its regained national sovereignty.

Crusatz regretted, however, that Spaniards were not willing to accept the German model due to its anti-Semitism. “How many times have I heard,” he complained, “men say they want a strong State for Spain, and in the [next moment] criticize those movements which have had success” in forming their own strong state. Taking the Third Reich as an example, he pointed to Spaniards who praised the achievements of Germany but then immediately and completely dismissed the Nazi movement because of “the mistake which it had made getting involved with the Jews.” Crusatz was saddened by the fact that “the great lesson that Germany [was] giving the world” was not the lesson of national rebirth but the promotion of universal suffrage as a reaction to its Jewish politics: “Let us admire the patriotic German movement, taking away from it lessons for Spain, and not allow the conquest of the State by means of suffrage.”<sup>112</sup> Crusatz’s conclusions suggest the anti-Semitic element of Nazism as the most problematic one for sectors of the Spanish public who might otherwise have been more receptive of the ideology. Yet, at least for him, the Third Reich could still serve as a model for Spain with the anti-Semitism disregarded.

A final article by Emilio Alvargonzález presented a similar view of Hitler and the Nazis. Taking up almost an entire page of an *Arriba* issue in June, he summarized and quoted in extended detail Hitler’s speech on a disarmament plan and the desire for improved foreign relations, adding his own commentary at the end. Believing the speech to be a genuine “invocation of peace,” Alvargonzález claimed that war would only occur as a result of the

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<sup>112</sup> “El mando único,” *Arriba* April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1935, 2.

“capitalist interests of the armament industries, which are financial speculators and revolutionary agitators.” Viewing Hitler as a model leader, Alvargonzález wrote:

After reading and re-reading this great speech and profound lesson . . . of the living political Right, of the living Economy, of the living international Right, expression of a nation en route toward [its] ideals, what a feeling of embarrassment and shame to read or hear . . . the cliché financiers, the scrap metal statesmen, and the wardrobe internationalists who . . . —on the left or right— numb the ideals of our imperial Spain!<sup>113</sup>

Here again, Hitler and Nazi Germany were viewed as models for the Spanish fascists, either offering lessons for national rebirth, as in the article by Cruszat, or bringing into focus the poor state of affairs in Spain by comparison with Germany. After these few articles, however, *Arriba* devoted little further space to German affairs. Once *Arriba* was shut down in March of 1936, no further fascist newspaper would be printed during the pre-Civil War period with the exception of the short-lived *No importa*. Written by Falange leader José Antonio Primo de Rivera after his arrest and prior to his execution, its three issues included no mention of either Germany or Italy. This epitomized the general Spanish trend of increased attention to the Spanish crisis at the expense of an outward focus.

### **Remilitarization of the Rhineland (March, 1936)**

With increased confidence about the limited international repercussions for his decisions, Hitler sent troops into the territory of the Rhineland between Germany and France in March of 1936. It had previously been demilitarized as decreed by the Treaty of Versailles, but the lack of response on the part of the Western powers to previous Nazi actions and the Italian invasion of Abyssinia months earlier convinced Hitler of his potential success. At this time, Spain had elected a new regime consisting of a leftist popular front to replace the conservative coalition

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<sup>113</sup> Emilio Alvargonzález, “Ventana al mundo,” *Arriba* June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1935, 2.

previously in power. As a result, the ideological conflicts between the various political factions intensified, with government raids and shootings occurring with greater frequency.

The combination of these factors led to minimal coverage of the news coming out of the Rhineland. *El Socialista*, after finally being relaunched that year, addressed the event for several days in short articles, but those reports were taken directly from news agencies with virtually no commentary included. The devotion of one full page out of its six total pages per issue was frequently reduced during this time period to add more space for further reporting on Spanish affairs. In addition, most of the foreign section that remained was used to report on and discuss the Italian-Abyssinian conflict.

Despite brief comments expressing a continued affinity among some of its writers, *ABC*'s reporting also demonstrated a transformation in its reporting style on Nazi Germany. Two brief examples of the remaining positive view among some of its writers seem to be the exception to a general move away from emotional and poetic glorifications of the Third Reich back to more straightforward reporting. In the first example, *ABC* mirrored its previous interpretation of the Saar plebiscite, writing that "the German gesture [of remilitarizing the Rhineland] is a logical consequence of the larger battle 'for honor and liberty,' or for the complete equality of rights." This perceived sense of injustice stemmed from the League of Nations' refusal to allow Germany to defend itself like the other members. The remilitarization was thus perceived as a move toward peace because it corrected this problem. Reflecting on Hitler's political victories, *ABC* wrote that "[i]n less than three years, Hitler has obtained advantages so great for his country, that other Governments would be satisfied to obtain them at the end of three lusters [a total of fifteen



years].”<sup>114</sup> In the second case, *ABC* defended Hitler’s move in opposition to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. This decision was seen as acceptable because it was normal for treaties, constitutions, and agreements to be broken when they fail to reflect reality.<sup>115</sup> In comparison to the frequent and often lengthy reports and interpretations presented by *ABC* previously, these two articles represent both the relative scarcity and brevity of positive sentiment in relation to Nazi Germany. Along with *El Socialista* and *Arriba*, the three newspapers demonstrated a return to relatively minimal interest in the Third Reich during the last year and a half of the Second Republic.

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<sup>114</sup> “Un día trascendental para la política europea: Hitler anuncia ante el parlamento que considera caducado el acuerdo de Locarno a consecuencia del tratado Francorruso y el Reich recobra su plena soberanía en la zona desmilitarizada,” *ABC*, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1936, 31.

<sup>115</sup> “Se acentúa el desequilibrio europeo: Sarraut dice que Francia no está dispuesta a examinar las nuevas proposiciones alemanas bajo una amenaza military,” *ABC*, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1936, 19.

## CONCLUSION

This study of the language and style of reporting on Nazi Germany and its affairs from 1930 until 1936 in several Spanish newspapers demonstrates the extent to which Spanish attention was directed to the German version of fascism. Several conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. First, the general trend of interest in Nazi Germany among *ABC*, *El Socialista*, and the series of fascist newspapers took the shape of a bell curve. During the first two years of 1930 until 1932, the elections in which the Nazis gained a surprising number of votes were given limited attention, other than some minor, politically oriented perceptions that were already emerging. The year 1933 saw the rise of Hitler to the position of German Chancellor and a series of events presenting increased pursuits of power, acts of repression, and international confrontation. These events helped inspire the foundation of a fascist party in Spain, along with two newspapers, *El Fascio* and *F.E.* Each of the socialist, conservative, and fascist newspapers increased its coverage or commentary on the Third Reich during that time, with the papers on the political right exhibiting a newfound attraction to the regime. This excitement and romanticized view of the Nazis peaked around 1933 and 1934 with the Röhm Putsch. Shortly thereafter, the assassination of Engelbert Dollfuss and the death of Paul von Hindenburg revealed the complicated nature of the previous enthusiasm for National Socialism. The final year and a half before the commencement of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 witnessed the final stagnation of direct interest for all the newspapers.

Second, the aspects of National Socialism that resonated with both *ABC* and the fascist newspapers were those that connected with the Spanish context and culture. The emergence of a strong authoritarian figure in Adolf Hitler, the struggle against democratic liberalism and communism, the appeal to a glorified historical past, and the perceived rebirth or re-strengthening of the nation were identified as positive factors. In contrast, the revolutionary and anti-Semitic traits of the movement were ignored or dismissed, later contributing to the waning interest in Nazism.

Third, in the particular case of *ABC*, the ambiguous perception of the Nazis came to the fore only when it was forced to confront two alternate models for right-wing politics. Under ordinary circumstances, the paper reported events in which the Nazis faced the allies (the Western powers who represented democratic liberalism) or communist adversaries, and were therefore depicted in a highly positive fashion. Only in the case of the Dollfuss and Hindenburg deaths was *ABC* clearer about its preference for the more traditional, militaristic, and, in the case of the former, Catholic leaders.

Fourth, despite historian Stanley Payne's assessment of a sharp decrease in Falangist interest in Germany beginning early in 1934—which was attributed to a visit paid by José Antonio Primo de Rivera that shattered his previously positive opinions of Nazism<sup>116</sup>—the fascist newspapers continued to print articles praising the Third Reich through at least 1935. *ABC*, which had shared many of the same reporters with the fascist newspapers, also continued to generally defend the Third Reich through 1936, though less frequently.

Fifth, *El Socialista* rarely connected German events to the Spanish political situation, and this can perhaps best be explained by the fact that Marxist ideology rejects notions of the nation

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<sup>116</sup> Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 158-159.

in favor of the international proletariat. Although the Spanish context may have been a consideration in its reporting, most mentions of the country were tied to its role in the global battle for socialism. However, there were some examples of *El Socialista*'s writers considering themselves republicans in favor of preserving the political structure in Spain at the time. Whether they genuinely felt an attachment to the Republic or viewed it as merely a stepping-stone toward a socialist state remains unclear from the newspaper reports alone.

Finally, the reactions and responses of the Spanish press to the rise of Nazi Germany offer insight into the difficulty in understanding and classifying the concept and ideology of fascism. Even contemporaries and self-declared fascists in Spain struggled to grasp the essence of fascism, the connections between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and the particularities of a Spanish version of the ideology. Their confusion paralleled and foretold the debates on the definition of fascism that continue to the present. The analysis of *El Fascio*, *F.E.*, and *Arriba* highlights the lack of clarity in formulating a uniquely Spanish variant of fascism. There was a tendency among writers of these newspapers to either emphasize the uniqueness of the Falange or to identify the general values that were mostly shared with other conservatives in Spain. This, along with the fact that many of the same reporters worked for multiple Spanish conservative newspapers even beyond the ones included here, might help explain the failure of the Falange or Spanish fascism to gain any serious support within Spain. With the most prominent difference between Spanish fascism and other conservative factions being its name and rhetoric, there was little the fascists could offer to the Spanish public to clarify its difference from other conservative parties and attract supporters. This also helps explain the ease with which General Francisco Franco was able to later combine the fascists into a unitary conservative party, thereby

reducing fascism's influence within Spain. Future research incorporating other conservative newspapers might help support this conclusion.

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